

## A PRETTY YOUNG LADY.

### A TALE OF HOME LIFE.

BY THEO. GIFT.

#### CHAPTER XVII.

##### LADY VANBOROUGH STARTS A NEW IDEA.

MRS. GREY'S face had certainly changed from white alarm to an expression of relief when Clive gave the answer recorded; and he noticed it. It was with a sort of smile, though a very weary and worried one, that she said, "You don't mean to say that your brother is still foolish enough to—"

"To go on loving you, and hunting for you everywhere in the hope of inducing you to reconsider your decision. Yes; I am sorry for his folly, but that is just what he is doing."

Mrs. Grey shrugged her shoulders. It was plain that she did not love Philip, else she had felt more sympathy for him.

"I am sorry for it," she said, "but I cannot help it. It is worse than folly, Bernard; it is something like madness. Nobody ever heard of a woman being persecuted in this way—and for simply saying 'no!'"

"Perhaps if you were to see him, and hear what he has to urge—"

"To what end? Did I not hear it all, not once but a dozen times, before I left Woodleigh? I verily believe that had I stayed there, he would have shot himself, or me, one morning. He did threaten it. Am I the only woman in the world?"

"You are the only woman for him, it seems."

"Not for him, you mean! At least, that is what I have striven to impress on him. Why will he not believe me?"

"Because you gave him no reason."

"But I did. I told him I did not love him. Is not that reason enough?"

"No, for he urges that if you would only give him the opportunity, he would win your love."

"He is self-confident," she said, with a smile.

"He is a man in love, and in earnest," Clive answered, gravely.

"A man! Say rather a boy compared to me, and a boy too obstinate to take a plain

answer. Bernard, cannot you persuade him of the utter hopelessness of his pursuit? Tell him that every day diminishes the liking and pity I have hitherto felt for him. Tell him—"

"My dear Mrs. Grey, I can tell him nothing from you without acknowledging that I know where you are."

"Well?"

"Well, simply this. Philip is my only brother, and I am weak enough to care about his trust and friendship. Were he to find out that I had been a party to keeping this secret from him, he would never speak to me or touch my hand again. That is all."

Mrs. Grey's eyes filled. She put out her hand and touched Bernard's kindly.

"All!" she repeated. "You must think me a selfish woman indeed, if you could credit me for being willing to purchase my present peace at the expense of a tithe of such an 'all.' Do you think that I do you as little justice? that I do not see what an utterly unselfish life yours has been, and what a good warm heart you try to hide under all your short answers and cold speeches? I am a very unfortunate woman, Bernard, but I should be more unfortunate still if I thought I was ever the means of inducing even the most transient coolness between two brothers like Philip and yourself."

"Thank you," Bernard said, quietly. He did not tell her that that was just what she had done. He said, laughingly, "It is a pity that you could not tell him you loved some one else, and so settle it."

"Would that have the desired effect?" she asked, so quickly as to startle him.

"I think so. In my case it would. I might be unfortunate enough to love a woman whose love was given to another, but I could never wish to make her my wife."

"Then I will write at once and tell him that," Mrs. Grey answered, with a quiet decision of tone and manner which showed she was in earnest—"that I love some one else better, a million times better than I

could ever have loved him, had there been no such obstacle in the way."

"Add, if you can," said Clive, gently, "that the person so honored by your interest is no shadow of the past, no memory of the unknowing dead, no grave of a dead husband, but the tangible reality of a living and happy rival."

He spoke slowly and gravely, seeking at the risk of probing her wounds to answer a question important to his own mind; and as he did so, the color came into her face in a deep rich glow, making her look indescribably lovely; but he had put up her spirit, and she answered firmly:

"Neither a shadow of the grave nor a memory of the dead, but a man as strong in life as himself, and happy—Well, I suppose—I hope so." She said the last words with her eyes turned from him, and in a tone of mingled pain and bitterness which Clive fancied he understood.

"So the man is not dead, after all, but alive," he thought. "Is she as good as she looks, I wonder? Could it have been a case of desertion? No, it is not likely that any one would have tired of her. I wish I knew, for the sake of my own opinion of her. She has acted her widowhood so beautifully that I have faith in her ability to act anything."

"Are you satisfied now?" said Mrs. Grey, turning to him with even more dignity than usual in her beautiful face—a dignity which almost rebuked the idea of ever so faint a reproach in connection with her. "You don't wish me to marry your brother, Bernard?"

"I don't wish you to do anything you would think wrong or unwise," he said, evasively; and then he added with a smile, "Forgive me for pressing you to this confession. It is like yourself, kind and generous, to make it; but I do not think you will be sorry later, for just now poor Phillip is laboring under a very different delusion."

"And that?"

"I am afraid I ought not to tell you," said Clive, laughing; but his eyes never left her face. "He picked it up down at Southampton a few days ago. You remember the lodgings you were at with Miss Clewer and your French maid when you first came to England?"

He paused, not so much for an answer, as at the deadly pallor which overspread her face—a pallor so intense that it reminded

him of nothing else in life—that was gray rather than white, and that turned her very finger nails livid in the cheery sunshine. Had a ghost risen before her, sheeted and clammy from the grave, she might have looked so, Clive thought; and up before his mind rose a picture he had once seen of the mother of mankind, Eve, lithe-limbed, grand and golden-haired, in the peaceful days of her exile, bending to lay the infant Abel on his leafy couch, and starting back, as from the vision of a past horror, at the sight of a serpent coiled upon the infant's pillow.

"Dear me! Mrs. Grey—are you ill?" he asked, startled at the effect his own words had produced. "For Heaven's sake, don't look like—"

What, was left unsaid; for in the same moment the door opened, and Lady Vanborough entered, laughing heartily, and followed by her fluting martyr.

"Allow you to give it up! No, certainly not, Mr. Whistleboy. I never allow anybody to give up what they undertake in connection with me. Hard on you! Of course I am hard on you. Some one must be, if you keep such atrocious time. Do you think I would let you practise with me if I couldn't be hard on you? And you are to come again on Thursday, and on Friday, too; and we'll have a try at it before Boli comes.—Well, Mr. Clive—has Mrs. Grey been amusing you properly? or have you been pining wearily for my presence? Please say the latter. I like people to be polite to me."

"How could I say anything else?" said Clive.

He spoke laughingly, and standing in front of Mrs. Grey, so as to shield her from observation. But Lady Bee's eyes were as sharp as her ears and tongue; and they had already caught sight of the dead-white face bent so nervously over its owner's work.

"Mrs. Grey, my dear," she said, abruptly, "you've got a headache. Mr. Clive has been boring you. He always does bore every one but me; so just leave him to me, and I'll give him a scolding. Go and lie down, and I'll send you up some tea. There is nothing like a cup of strong tea with a teaspoonful of brandy in it for a headache."

Mrs. Grey rose at once, and with almost grateful alacrity; but Clive put out his hand, a look of apology in his eyes.

"Good-by, Mrs. Grey," he said. "I'm

afraid I have bored you; but I won't do so again; and please send me that letter for the clergyman we were speaking of, and I will forward it to him. He will be grateful for the charity."

He took her hand in his, but it felt very cold, and she merely bowed her head in answer before taking it and herself away.

Lady Vanborough rang for tea; and, during the clatter made by its appearance, said to Clive in an abrupt aside:

"You two are not making fools of yourselves, I hope."

"Making— I don't understand you, Lady Vanborough," said Clive, haughtily, and staring.

"Have you quarrelled?" she asked, paying no manner of heed to his tone.

"I hope not."

"You would be a fool if you did; though, mind you, I've no patience with her; for I think she's behaving like the mother of all geese."

Clive raised his shoulders somewhat impatiently. It was not a polite gesture; but then Lady Vanborough was not given to politeness herself.

"Are we playing at conundrums?" he asked. "If so, please let me run away. I never could guess the simplest riddle to save my life."

"That is probably why you think other people can't either," retorted Lady Vanborough; "but you must be dense indeed if you can't see that she cares for you."

And then she turned round to Mr. Whistleboy, and began teasing him, until another visitor dropped in; and Clive, knowing it was useless to wait for an explanation, took his leave.

"By George!" he muttered, when he found himself in the street again. "My brain seems to be turning. Averil Grey care for—Bah! the woman's mad—always was. Doesn't every one know her vagaries? That would be an awkward solution, indeed, if I were vain enough to give it credence; but no, that pale face of hers was proof too positive of the truth of my own suspicion. Good gracious! though—"

And Clive almost came to a full stop as there flashed across his mind the thought that Lady Bee's theory and his own were by no means inconsistent—that it was possible Mrs. Grey might be indeed the unfortunate woman he deemed her, and yet be doubly unfortunate in having given her affections

to himself. It might be so; but Clive made a wry face over it. Strangely enough (for young men are not given to resenting the idea of a conquest) he felt a distaste for the mere suggestion of this, which almost amounted to repugnance. He had plenty of faults, but vanity was not one of them; and the suspicion that Mrs. Grey cared for him diminished her worth in his eyes, in place of increasing his own. He had chosen to think of her as a queen among women—a queen widowed and exiled from her rightful sphere, but none the less queenly, or deserving of homage and reverence. He had revered her, loved her almost, with that sort of royal brotherly love which some men can feel for women of whom they never think as in any closer relationship to themselves than that of friends; and when Philip's researches opened a new field for imagination regarding her, and suggested a darker and sadder reason for her exile than limited means, or consecration to a husband's memory, the loyalty of his friendship had found strength to hold closer to its shrine through all the pain of its defacement, and to construct a theory of trust abused, of innocence wronged, and of a soul which had left its all on earth for conscience' sake, and yet had enshrined that "all" within its heart, and suffered no other tenant to enter therein. Such a theory, painful as it was to contemplate for her sake, yet left Averil Grey high and stainless on the pedestal where he had placed her—a pedestal where indeed it might be right she should stand alone and unsupported through her earthly days, but whence none had right or title to cast her down. But to think of her as a woman light and unstable as others, weak enough to forget the past, and throw away her love anew on a man who had never even sought it—who did not return it—on him of all men—that was quite a different order of things; and with all his strength Clive strove to drive it out of his mind, hating Lady Bee the while for having planted it there.

"It is an absurd figment of her own overheated brain. Better not to pay it the compliment of thinking of it at all," he said to himself.

In his heart he did think of it, and carried his thought into action. He kept away from Lady Vanborough's for the next week.

Philip wrote to him in a few days. He kept up his resentment as long as he could;

but finding Harriet even more unsympathizing than Bernard (his sister had taken for her text—"If there were not something wrong about Mrs. Grey, she would never have gone off in that mysterious way, after pretending to care for Minnie too; and making the servants talk, and all") he was driven to magnanimous forgiveness of the brother who had always been his best friend, and made him the confidant of his passion as heretofore.

"I have found the lady's maid," he wrote, "after a great deal of trouble; for she had moved from her first address, and keeps a very poky little milliner's shop in Lamb's Conduit Street; and I have found out one or two more things; though with even more difficulty, and at the expense of a good deal more bamboozling than I like. The woman is as stanch as steel to her mistress, and will not let out one word as to her whereabouts and antecedents. When I tell you, however, that I am to have the very trunk I told you of sent down to me at Woodleigh to-morrow, you may guess I have done something, though it is not with the mistress of the establishment."

"Gone down from lodging-house keepers to servant-girls," said Philip, with a shrug of his broad shoulders. "And this is love! It is not an elevating element, of a certainty."

Apparently some mysterious intuition—what the fair and fast lady spiritualists of the day elect to call "superior psychic force"—had led Philip to foresee what would be his brother's sentiments; for he broke off here, and added abruptly:

"I had meant to tell you all about it, but I think I will wait; for until you see the result you will be pulling long faces, and cavilling at the necessary steps leading to the end. I give you credit for sufficient family affection to wish me joy when that end is won, and Averil my wife."

He said not a word of having received any letter from Mrs. Grey; and looking back at the hopeful expectant ring of Philip's own, Bernard could not think that Mrs. Grey had been true to her intention.

"And yet, if she could look me in the face and say it, surely she could say it to him," he thought, with some irritation, and an emphasis on the "me," which might undoubtedly have been traced to that communication from Lady Vanborough, of which he had determined not to think.

"Perhaps the hint I gave her, and which alarmed her so much, made her change her mind about writing to him. Perhaps she thought Lady Vanborough's entrance prevented my saying more, and has been expecting me to renew the subject. Poor thing! if that is the case, I ought to call, and put her out of her suspense; for I really did not intend to say any more, and was rather thankful for the interruption. I must put this nonsense out of my head, and call."

But unfortunately it is sometimes harder to drive nonsense out of a head than to drive sense into it; and Mr. Clive delayed paying his call till, as I have said, more than a week had passed away; and then, one afternoon when he had nothing better to do, turned up at Lady Vanborough's door, and inquired if that individual was at home.

"No; her ladyship is out of town," the footman said.

"Was Mrs. Grey gone with her?"

"Yes; Mrs. Grey was gone too."

He did not say "with her;" but to hear that she was gone was enough for Clive, who departed with a decided sense of relief. Strong hard man as he was, he felt as nervous and bashful as a girl at meeting the woman who had flushed under his gaze in such beautiful womanly embarrassment, as she owned that his brother's rival in her affections was no memory of a dead husband, but a living and happy man. He was glad not to see her again; and yet when he went home he felt irritated with himself for not having called sooner. If he could have seen Lady Vanborough, at least, and forced her to explain and give a reason for what she had said! If he could but have convinced her of the absurdity of her own eccentric fancy! But he had delayed too long; and now Lady Vanborough and Mrs. Grey were both gone, and only the eccentric idea remained behind, to irritate him by its absurdity till their return.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### WELCOME AND UNWELCOME VISITORS.

"Did we startle you very much, Miss Bellew?" said Dallas, as he took her hand, while George, having espied Dottie deep in a primrose nook, crept off on his hands and knees, to treat her to a similar awakening.

"I don't know how strong your nerves may be; but your brother was so imperious on the subject, that to keep the peace I was obliged to let him have his own way."

"I think that Dick and Eve are the only two of us who indulge in such a luxury as nerves," said Kate, laughing, and certainly showing no displeasure at the rencontre; "you did make me jump, however; I could hardly believe it was George; and what can have brought you down here?"

"Brought me? Well, my young guest. You should have kept an eye on your little sister's correspondence, Miss Bellew, if you did not wish to see me; for George got such a heart-rending epistle from Miss Madge, the day before yesterday, describing fish which might have jumped into his hand if he were only there to catch them, and 'heavenly' ovens which baked all the delicacies he could possibly have concocted, had he been on the spot to concoct them, that the young scamp became utterly miserable and broken-hearted at the thought of all you were enjoying without him, and moped so piteously, that I had no resource but to bring him down for a day or two, to try whether the reality were as delightful as the description."

"And you came all this journey to satisfy George's fancies; but, Mr. M'Kenzie, you should not," cried Kate, quite ashamed and contrite; "you are a great deal too good, and it is spelling him."

Mr. M'Kenzie laughed as if amused.

"Is it? I don't know much about children unfortunately, or how far you may gratify without spoiling them; but it is not too good of me, Miss Bellew, or good at all; for I think I considered my own pleasure as much as his."

Kate did not believe this, and said out her thoughts.

"I am afraid you are making him a great trouble to you. Mamma would be vexed if she knew."

"Indeed I am not. It is a pleasant change in my lonely life to have so lively a young companion; and I am not at all sorry to get a breath of country air, and a look at the sea upon so a decent an excuse. George and I are 'located' at the inn; so when we become too much for you, just send us away; for I am afraid we are both rather self-indulgent people, and not inclined to think of others' comfort when we are gratifying our own. How is your elder brother?"

Kate answered him gratefully. Knowing how delightful the beginning of the season was to herself, and forgetting that Mr. M'Kenzie's greater age and experience might have rather damped his taste for pleasure, she thought it wonderfully unselfish of him to have even torn himself away from it for a couple of days.

"I don't believe one of the men who take one down to dinner, and are always wanting to do things for one, would dream of taking such a journey to please a little boy," thought Kate, who had apparently forgotten that "comparisons are odious," and was not yet sufficiently conceited to fancy that Mr. M'Kenzie could have taken such a journey for the sole purpose of seeing her.

They all walked back to the house together, George and Dottie laden with wild flowers, and the former in a state of rampant excitement over a great plan for surprising Madge on her return. Dottie said little, being conscious that her part in life at present was to listen and obey; and being further divided between the difficulty of holding a stack of flowers almost as big as herself, and not tumbling head over heels over all and each of the stones and twigs which would come in the way of her baby feet; but George held forth volubly, scraps of his monologue floating backwards to Kate and M'Kenzie walking more quietly behind.

"And then I shall be under the sofa, and you are to say"—"As loud a yell as I can"—"but mind, Dottie, you don't even look as if—"

Mr. M'Kenzie smiled.

"The happiest age!" he said, a little enviously. "Everything before it, disappointment a word unknown, and every pebble in its path a jewel. I wish one could go back to it."

"I don't," said Kate, who was not of a looking-back temperament, "and I think childish disappointments are keener than all others. I can remember some of mine now, particularly one when Uncle Theo had promised to take me to a pantomime on my birthday. It was quite an unheard-of thing for him to do, but I was only five years old, and I believe he had taken a fancy to me for something I said or did. Anyhow, he promised to come for me on that evening; and I was wild with excitement for two days beforehand, and wilder still when the evening came, and no uncle! Papa and

mamma had to go out to dinner, so I sat dressed up in all my finery, and waiting in the drawing-room—for I thought I could hear the first sound of the carriage-wheels better there than in the nursery—and in the end he never came! He had forgotten all about his promise almost as soon as it was given. Do you know, I can recall now the misery of disappointment I suffered until at last I cried myself to sleep. Papa took me on the following night, and I dare say—in fact, I know—I enjoyed it very much; but no after pleasure could blot out the past pain, and, you see, I remember it still.”

“Poor child!” said Mr. McKenzie, smiling on her very kindly. “Poor little child! But it is difficult to imagine you in tears now. I should hardly have thought you had ever known what crying meant; and you surprise me in another point.”

“What is that?” said Kate, as he paused. “But I can cry, I assure you, even now. Sometimes I cry over books—Dickens and—but what is the other thing?”

“I am afraid you would not like me to tell you.”

“Indeed I shall. What is it?”

“Well, I did not think you were a girl—I beg your pardon; a young lady—to nurse an injury, however cruel in your mind. I could fancy you getting very angry at a pinch”—and he smiled—“and perhaps stamping your foot, and withering up an offender with a few hot words; but I did not think it was in your nature to remember the wrong done for years afterwards.”

He spoke half in jest, half dreamily; but Kate took it quite *au sérieux*. Indeed, considering that she was rather fond of boasting her indifference to other people’s ill opinion, and of asserting that a consciousness of one’s own rectitude ought to be sufficient for any reasonable person, the young lady betrayed a somewhat suspicious soreness and mortification under this suggestion of blame from her new friend.

“I do not remember it in the way you mean,” she said, reddening like a rose, and showing a great disposition to pout. “I was not even angry with Uncle Theo then—I was too unhappy. It is only the disappointment I remember. Mr. McKenzie, please do not think I am so unforgiving and revengeful as all that. I am not; indeed I am not. I may have a quick temper”—and Kate reddened deeper still—“I dare say I have, and that you may have

even seen me show it; but I am always very sorry afterwards. Dick knows I am, and—and nobody ever minds me; not even the children. If you knew—”

“But I think I do know,” Mr. McKenzie broke in, looking down with a gentle mingling of liking and amusement into the fair flushed face. “I could not even fancy you unforgiving or revengeful in the very least. Did I not say so? And as to temper, you must have strangely misunderstood my awkward speech, if you thought I believed you to have a quicker temper than goes with every warm heart and fresh impulsive mind. Believe me, the person who has lost the power of getting honestly and justly angry, has lost much of what is noble, and loving, and true into the bargain. No, I spoke from—well, I am afraid from unhappy reminiscences—from the memory of a woman who never forgot, even when she forgave, and whose forgiveness thus lost half, and more than half, of its value; and yet her heart *was* warm once. Was it that impossibility of forgetting even the smallest wrong which chilled it through and through?”

He had forgotten Kate utterly before he finished, and was talking with his great dark eyes fixed in a sort of feverish yearning on the misty blue horizon, with a quiver of repressed pain about his mouth, which made the girl’s heart thrill with quick responsive sympathy. She saw plainly that she and all about her had passed out of his mind; but she was not offended. It was only another proof that he was not like other men; and with all her girlish curiosity she wondered who or what was this woman whom he must have loved so passionately, since the mere thought of her blotted out present things; and who had given him nothing but coldness and pain in return—ay, and hard thoughts of other and gentler women for her sake, the girl thought with a faint unconscious resentment against the unknown shade she was conjuring up.

The children were running and laughing through the ferns and underwood before them; but she had forgotten them as he (Dallas) had forgotten her, and walked on in a sort of painful wondering silence at his side. And yet it was so beautiful around them! The young trees almost leafless yet in this exposed part; or rather only budded over with tender leaflets; but green, green all over, trunk and limbs, and

every twig and shoot, with a mossy verdure which gave them the appearance of being covered with some delicate emerald-hued lichen, and made it difficult to tell where the leaves were out or the branches bare; trees which looked as if they had been lightly sketched in with a brush full of wet green paint on a background of pale pure cobalt; springing from a bed of bracken, brown and dry, and making a pleasant contrast to the vivid emerald of meadows beyond. There was nothing to impede the view as in full-leaved summer. You could see from end to end of the copse through this exquisite moss-tinted tracery; could catch the diamond-like leap and flash of the little brook rippling through a bed of reeds on its way to the sea; and beyond the trees the dusky brown, dashed with gold, of the gorse-clad common; and, further still, the broad patches of amber-colored plowed land on the hills. A few more steps, and they came out into the full breeze and sunshine of the unsheltered moor, so bright and wind-swept, that all the depression vanished from M'Kenzie like a cloud scattered by the sunbeams; his very step grew more elastic, his eyes lightened, and his lips parted.

"How silent we are!" he said. "Is the day or the scene too lovely for talking?" And then his eye fell on Kate, and he asked, anxiously:

"You are not offended with me, Miss Bellew, are you? I am sure I gave you cause; but bear in mind what a rough old backwoodsman I am, and please forgive me."

"Angry! O no!" said Kate, heartily. It was on her lips to say that the fact of his asking it was an additional proof that he believed in what he had implied as to her capacity for resentment; on her lips, but not in her heart. Have I not told you how prone Kate was to frightening away the young men by sharp speeches, which somehow bubbled up to her tongue without being prompted by any "malice prepense?" It was something too strong for even the girlish impulse to repartee which stayed her speech now; and she had her reward in a grateful smile, and a "Thank you" as heartily spoken as her answer.

It was lunch time when they got back to the cottage; and Dallas M'Kenzie noted with a sense of pleasure and amusement Kate's happy flutter, all unspoiled by any shade of embarrassment, at playing sole

hostess for the occasion, and the almost childish high spirits which danced in her eyes, and rang in every word she uttered. She was like a child playing at housekeeping, and the girlish fun mingling with the little solemn affectations of matronhood and sobriety were bewitching enough to charm an anchorite into forgetfulness of his vows.

"A very sweet little girl, large-hearted and simple-minded," Dallas thought to himself. "What a bonny type of an English wife and mother she will make some of these days! I hope she will get a good husband; for upon my life I don't know any young fellow worthy of her."

It may seem strange, but no thought of himself came into his mind with the suggestion; and yet I doubt if, just then, he would have resented the idea if propounded, or offered other objection than—"Bah, I am too old by a dozen years for her," or "My day for that sort of thing has passed." They all went into the garden after lunch, and sat under the almond tree, talking and looking over the sea, till, on the boat with Dick and Madge in it coming into sight, George insisted that Mr. M'Kenzie should retire out of view, and Kate lend her aid in his "surprise." He had planned it all beforehand; but, when it came to the point, was not contented with any of the hiding-places suggested; and was still standing in the middle of the floor, wavering between the choice of a cupboard or a window-curtain, when the door opened—there was a loud shriek, "George!"—and Madge flung herself upon him, and nearly knocked him down with the vehemence of her greeting.

The boat had come to land sooner than was expected, and it was George who was surprised, after all.

Dick joined the party in a few minutes; and, to Kate's great relief, forgave his younger brother's arrival in pleasure at having a fellow-man to talk to. He had seen very little of Dallas M'Kenzie, and the two, being neither of an age nor a temperament to assimilate, had not cared much for one another; but Dallas liked Kate sufficiently to pardon a great deal in her relations; and Dick was so glad to see some one with the latest news from London, that he put on his best colors, and made the guest so heartily welcome that Dallas thought the young man had his good points in him, after all. Kate felt highly delighted, for her brother had been growling ominously the

last two or three days about not having a soul, man or woman, to speak to beside his own family; and she *had* found a friend, a very interesting one of her own sex, of whom more must be said hereafter, but of whom she said nothing to any one; albeit her conscience reproached her for keeping any pleasure, however small, a secret from the brother she would have liked to have shared it with. Mr. M'Kenzie's arrival was therefore doubly pleasant to her when she saw that it pleased Dick; and she sat between them radiant with smiles, and managing with pretty womanly tact to draw out just the good points in each which could be best appreciated by the other.

There would be greater peace and goodwill did women always employ their tact in a similar manner.

Mr. M'Kenzie stayed two or three days, very pleasant days, during which Kate came to know and like him better than she had ever done before; and Dick did not lose his temper once! At the beginning of their stay he had received one or two unpleasant letters (one from Clive), over which he had sworn viciously, and which had left him moody and irritable for the whole day afterwards; but apparently their remembrance had passed out of his mind by now; and Kate, somewhat unjustly, attributed the favorable alteration to the change of friends.

"There is something about Mr. Clive which *makes* people cross and disagreeable; I am glad he is not here," the young lady thought, with uncharitable fervor. "Mr. M'Kenzie never blames Dick, or roughs him up. How different the dear boy is with him!"

If that thought was wrong, it was most decidedly punished, and with no lack of speed. On the third morning of Mr. M'Kenzie's stay, Dick laid down a letter over which he had been growling through the chief part of breakfast, with the remark:

"See that there is something decent for dinner to-day, Kate. Clive's coming."

"Coming—coming *here!*" cried Kate, with a ludicrous face of dismay. "What for? Has anything happened?"

"Happened? Nonsense! Don't look as if you had swallowed a donkey, hoofs and all" (certainly Clive's letters had not a soothing effect on Dick's mind or manners). "What should have happened? I asked him long ago to run down and see me if he possibly could; and he says he is coming

from Saturday (that is to-day) till Monday. I suppose there are plenty of rooms to be got at the inn, M'Kenzie?"

Dallas said he believed that there were. He was breakfasting with them, and looked with some surprise at the unwonted disturbance on his young hostess's brow. Perhaps the idea crossed his mind that it might be occasioned by the prospective trouble of having two guests to entertain—"poor child!"—and accordingly, as soon as breakfast was over, and Dick had gone up to the inn, to engage a room for Clive, he said:

"I hope George won't think me very barbarous if I carry him off to town again to-day. I really think I ought not to stay away any longer."

Kate was folding up the newspaper which Dick had left upon the floor. She dropped it again when he spoke, facing round upon him with a most genuine expression of concern.

"To-day! O Mr. M'Kenzie, do not. What can you want in town before Monday, at any rate? Yes, we should all think you very barbarous to go, just as Mr. Clive is coming too, and you are really wanted."

"But, my dear Miss Bellew, it is just because Mr. Clive is coming that I should think I could not be wanted. It is very good and sweet of you to make me so welcome; but still, to have two gentlemen on your hands at once—"

"But *you* are not on my hands," cried Kate, quite laughing at the idea, "and Mr. Clive is so—well, I ought not to abuse him, and I dare say he means well, and is very good, and all that (Dick likes him, you know, so there must be some good in him), but if you would stop just while he is here, I should be—it would make it so much more pleasant;" and Kate looked up in almost childish pleading. M'Kenzie smiled at the pretty, confused, coaxing jumble, and felt glad he was not Bernard Clive, to be the subject of such barely veiled dislikes.

"Of course I will stay if you wish it," he said. "Do you think it is so unpleasant to me? I don't care very much about improving Mr. Clive's acquaintance; but not from any dislike to him, for I have always heard of him as a very clever honorable young man, and—"

"Perfect in every way!" put in Kate, spitefully. "There!" (recollecting herself), "see how petty even talking of him makes me! but I can't help it—indeed I can't; and



he can't bear me, so that I am not wholly to blame. By the way, did you not meet him abroad?"

"Yes," said M'Kenzie (a very simple answer, which stopped the utterance of sundry more questions on Kate's lips, and set her pondering, without knowing why). Five minutes later she came out with the result of her meditations.

"I wish I could hold my tongue."

"Do you?" said M'Kenzie, laughing outright at the abruptness of the speech, and the comically penitent look which accompanied it; "I am sure I don't."

"Then you ought to do so," cried Kate, too remorseful to heed his mirth. "If I had no tongue, I should be quite good—really good—and now I am not. Of course it is wrong to go on sneering at Mr. Clive, when he is one of Dick's friends too. It is not even dignified or becoming, and you must know it is not; but it is only a way of talking, Mr. M'Kenzie. We never have liked each other, but—"

"But you would hardly rejoice if a railway accident smashed him up into infinitesimal atoms coming down here," Dallas suggested. "No, Miss Bellew, don't be afraid. I lay very little stress on enmities so frankly avowed; and as to Mr. Clive's disliking you—"

"But he does," cried Kate, clasping her hands together to give emphasis to the sentence. "You've no idea how he does. Why" (with a look which, added to the *naïvete* of the conclusion, made M'Kenzie's eyes dance), "that is just why I don't like him."

"A very natural and proper reason," Dallas said, gravely. "And so you want me to help in keeping the peace, and reminding you that 'your little hands were never meant to tear each other's eyes.' Is not that quoted correctly? Very well. I had reasons for not caring to grow more intimate with Mr. Clive than was necessary; but in such a cause of course they vanish. Let me make one request, however. If you don't want me to dislike your friend even more than you do, please put off that very grave little face. You have been looking so bright till now, that we could not easily feel in charity with any one who spoilt our house sunshine."

Kate laughed and promised. She was indeed feeling too happy to care much for the mere prospect of Clive's grave looks and

strictures. True, the brightness faded a little when she found that M'Kenzie was not going to dine with them that day; but she said hardly a word to press him; for had not Dick spoken something about business to discuss with Clive, and was it not therefore most delicate and thoughtful in the other guest to discover that an old school acquaintance of his had a living some eight miles off, and must be visited on this special evening? The brightness came back in a minute, and M'Kenzie's good-bys were sweetened by a smile which made even the sunshine look dull and cheerless by comparison during the first part of his ride. For the first time an idea came into his mind, so strange as to startle him. At first he rejected it with prompt decision; but it came back again, and knocked persistently for admittance.

"She likes me already, likes and trusts me as though I were an old friend, instead of a comparative stranger. Would it be hard to turn such liking into love, and keep that living sunshine for my own?"

Verily and indeed a strange idea, and one not to be lightly entertained by Dallas M'Kenzie. Did not the shadow of another woman stand between him and the possession of any such sunshine as he coveted? He put the idea away from him with a shivering frown, and rode on gloomily.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### AN UNSOCIABLE ARTIST.

I HAVE heard women say that it is sometimes necessary to go back in a piece of fancy work, and pick up dropped stitches, the want of which might impair the symmetry of the entire pattern. In like manner I must go back now in my narrative, and mention a little incident which, trifling as it seemed, was not without importance in the history of Kate Bellew's life.

Is anything without importance, by the way, in this world of ours, and have not the very gravest events in the whole history of man sometimes hung upon the slightest pegs? For my part it is always the *little* things and first steps which I look after. The big things, the crises and crashes of life, must generally be left to God. They are out of our power to remedy or control when they have come to their full ripeness. If we want to prevent a tree from bearing fruit, we must nip off the buds in springtime.

Not many days after their arrival at Combe Regis, Kate had occasion to go over to the nearest town, to cash a check her mother had sent her. It was Dick's duty to go, of course, Kate knowing about as much of business as a fly of farming; but Dick had a sick headache; and though his sister privately thought the air would do it more good than lying on the sofa smoking endless paper cigars, she only ventured to suggest as much, very gently; and her suggestion being received with a somewhat indignant contradiction, the young lady acquiesced at once with a good-humored:

"Well, never mind, dear, only as there is that check to be cashed to-day, I shall have to leave you and go about it myself."

And Dick stretched himself out on the sofa with a weary yawn, and went to sleep.

The two girls, in the meanwhile, had set out briskly on the road to Greybridge, the little town to which they were bound. Madge was in high spirits at having her sister "all to herself" for a walk, and chattered away as fast as she walked, so that the road was got over in no time; and they had reached Greybridge, cashed their check, and had even made a purchase of one or two articles which Combe Regis was too primitive to produce, before five striking from the old church tower in the High Street warned them that it was time to return.

"I feel as fresh as if I could run the whole way," said Madge, as they struck into the lanes again. "Isn't it a lovely afternoon? and O, look at that goldfinch, Katie; I wonder if he has a nest in the hedge."

"Don't go after him with those parcels," said Kate; "and be content with walking, Madge. If you frisk about in that way you'll tumble down in another minute, and spill all the biscuits into the road."

And then, in the very moment of speaking, the thing she prophesied came to pass. Madge was scampering from one side to the other of the road, as first one thing and then another attracted her attention; when she caught her foot against a stone, and came headlong to the ground, sending her parcels and their contents flying into the dust and gravel. Kate ran and picked her up, more vexed than compassionate at first.

"There, Madge! I told you so. What a pity it is you are such a tomboy! and nearly thirteen too! Do look at the tea all spilt and wasted; and the biscuits too. One can gather them up, but—"

"I've hurt myself," said Madge; "don't scold me, Katie, I didn't mean it, and I'm very sorry; but I've hurt my foot. O, I've hurt it awfully;" and, after one futile attempt at standing upright, she subsided into a sitting position in the middle of the dusty lane, and began to cry. Kate knelt down beside her, all sympathy in a moment.

"My poor child! I am so sorry. Let me look at it. Do—I won't hurt you indeed;" and with very tender fingers, Madge flinching and almost screaming during the process, she proceeded to take off the girl's boot and stocking, and lay bare the wounded member.

Madge stopped her tears to look at it, and then broke out afresh at the sight of blood.

"I've broken my ankle, and I shan't be able to walk all the rest of the time we are here," she sobbed, dolefully.

"O no, you haven't," said Kate, who had been examining the injury. "You've bruised your instep, and have taken the skin off your ankle and shin; and I think you may have strained it a little; but that's all; so don't cry, Madge dear, there's a brave girl. I really think you could stand if you tried. Put your foot down on my handkerchief, and see."

"Do you think it is really not broken?" asked Madge, a little reassured by Kate's tone; and then she did as advised, and stood up.

"It hurts dreadfully," she said, sitting down again after a trial of a few seconds. "I can stand; but I'm sure I couldn't walk a dozen yards; and it is such a long way home. Katie, what shall we do?"

"I think we had better wait a little," said Kate, trying to speak more cheerfully than she felt. "Perhaps the pain will go off in a few minutes if you let the foot rest. Here, Madge, lean on me, and try to hop to the bank under the hedge. I would carry you if I could, but you're too heavy; and you will be more comfortable there."

"Hush!" Kate broke in, holding up her finger.

There was a sound of wheels not far off; and, leaving go of Madge, she ran to the nearest opening in the lane, and saw to her great joy a light cart coming along the road, and driven by a man whose face she fancied was familiar to her. She was right. He lived at Combe Regis, had been sent with a load of grain to Greybridge that morning, and was returning now with the empty sacks.

"Eh, zure he'd be roight glad to take t' young missus home wi' un if her foot wur hurted. He could sit on t' sacks, an' ride like a queen fur zure."

Kate, looking into the weather-beaten, kindly old face, with its fringe of whitish-gray hair hanging round it under the battered straw hat, thought so too; and Madge was delighted. To ride in a cart, albeit destitute of springs, was too delightful a sequel to her adventure to be rejected by the little Londoner; and she was speedily seated on a throne of sacks, with her foot well supported, begging Kate to assume a seat beside her. But Kate shook her head.

"No, thank you!"

"It's a great deal nicer than a stupid cab or carriage, I'm sure," interrupted Madge. "How envious Flo de Ponsonby will be! She's never ridden in a cart in all her life. I'll write and tell her about it to-night."

"All right, so you don't ask me to make another theme for envy. I shall be home before you, if I go by the lanes, and shall have hunted out the arnica from whatever box it's in," said Kate. "Are you sure you are comfortable, and that your foot doesn't hurt you now?"

And on receiving a hearty assent to both questions, the elder girl nodded a smiling farewell, and turned back into the lane to take the short cut home.

It was much pleasanter walking there than along the broad high road, three inches deep in dust, and bordered by interminable straight hedgerows, also as white as a miller's boy with the same gritty impalpable substance; much pleasanter to wend along deep winding lanes, with tall trees just putting out their leaves in a green arch overhead, and high hawthorns budded over with rosy white bloom, tangled blackberry bushes, and nests of purple and white violets sending out sweet fragrance from their covert of dark sheltering leaves on either side; to climb over a stile here, and cross a meadow—the velvety grass all gemmed with golden cowslips—there; or pick up her petticoats, and spring daintily from stepping-stone to stepping-stone across a narrow foaming stream. In performing the latter feat she sent a stone splashing into the water, and uttered a little cry, which apparently startled some one near; for there was a sudden rustling of garments, and a face strangely beautiful, but pale and nervous, rose up from behind a tree, where its owner had been sit-

ting, and glanced with a frightened anxious expression at Kate. It was a lady, tall and painfully delicate-looking, dressed in white of some thick material, with a black lace scarf knotted round her throat, and a quantity of light golden hair coiled very loosely at the back of her head, from which the scarf had fallen. She had risen from a little campstool set under the shelter of the trees, letting fall in the act, a whole lapful of paints and brushes which, in conjunction with an easel supporting a half-finished picture, showed what her occupation had been.

"I am afraid I startled you," said Kate, coming forward with ready courtesy to assist in picking up the scattered tubes of color. "I slipped in crossing the brook, and after having had one accident to-day—but how—how lovely! I beg your pardon, but are you really doing this?"

"Do you think I have got the effect?" said the lady, smiling. She had recovered her composure now, for the hectic spot of red in either cheek which had succeeded her late pallor looked more like latent fever than recent agitation. There was a little look of amusement in her eyes as Kate made that ecstatic bound towards the picture, and bent over it with clasped hands and eager eyes, as if she were devouring it. M'Kenzie might well say that Miss Bellew had a most thorough appreciation for art.

"It does not last long," she added, "but I thought the sunlight on the under side of those leaves made too beautiful an effect to be lost."

Kate looked where she pointed, and owned it was beautiful. They were standing at the entrance to a steep narrow lane, bordered on one side by a row of large elms in full leaf. The sun was setting, and these trees stood up in the foreground above the sinking orb, green above and gold below. Every tender transparent leaf was lined with gold. There were golden splashes on the gray mossy trunks, broken glints, and specks, and drops of gold flecking the whole dim avenue with glittering touches. In the western sky the sun, like a huge globe of fire, was descending through a bath of liquid glory from a sky all tender opaline tints of rose and cream, and threw a reflected blush of deep pink on the palings of Datherly Park in the east, behind which a thick belt of dark, impenetrable, gray-green foliage stood up in sombre contrast to the ethereal glow above.

The artist's picture was as yet only roughly sketched in with color; but it was sufficient to show the general effect, and give a fair idea of how excellent the finished work would be.

"I envy you," said Kate, in her abrupt way, as she turned again from the scene to the picture. "I would give—O, everything in the world to know how to paint even half as well as this, and I cannot even daub. I have taken lots of drawing-lessons, and I have learnt to draw triangles, and wheel-barrows, and logs of wood; and you can't tell one from another when they're done. I do envy you."

There was no preventing a smile at the ludicrously dismal tone in which this was said, or rather jerked out, as much to herself as to the artist; and the latter's pale sad face lightened up in a little amused laugh. It sobered down again almost immediately, and she said very gravely:

"Do not begin to envy me because I can make a sketch which you cannot. Perhaps you have a hundred better gifts for this one little talent of mine."

"Indeed I have not," said Kate. "You mean talents, too, I suppose, but you are wrong. I can sing a little, and—and I can write poetry, and that is all I can do."

[And that "all" was incorrect. Kate could sing very well, and she could not write poetry at all but only very bad rhymes; but that is a nicety of distinction which young women—and young men, too—do not in general seem capable of comprehending.—AUTHOR.]

"I think that singing is even a more pleasurable gift than painting," said the lady. She was going on with her picture again now, and seemed to speak more from kindness than a desire to prolong the conversation. "It is less disappointing; and if you can sing your own poetry—But," she added, breaking off suddenly with the same nervous look she had worn before, "you spoke of an accident. You have not been riding, I see. Do you belong to a party, and—"

"No; I am alone," said Kate, wondering a little at the look of relief greeted this intelligence, "and the accident happened to my sister. She hurt her foot, and has had to be taken home in a cart."

"But there is no way for a cart down here," said the stranger, glancing back at the stream. "It is only a footway. In-

deed, I thought people very seldom came by it. They told me so at the farm."

"And I should think they were right," answered Kate. "We did not meet a soul when we went to Greybridge this morning. No; Madge has had to go home by the road; and that is why I am glad to rest"—she had sat down on the roots of the tree—"for it is a long way round, and the horse looked so stiff and old, I am sure it will be a good hour before they get to Combe Regis."

"You live at Combe Regis?" said the artist, painting away busily.

"We are lodging there—my brother, and my two little sisters, and I. Do you know it? It is the quaintest little village."

"No; I have heard the name, but—" There was an anxious look in her face, as if she were trying to think where. She added, abruptly, "I had no idea it was near. Is it?"

"About two miles off only. You should come over there. You have no idea what lovely sketches you would find down by the beach, and it is a very pretty walk this way."

The stranger shook her head.

"I am not strong enough to try it," she said, very decidedly. "I have been ill, and am only here for perfect rest and quiet, and freedom from strangers."

It was not a very courteous speech, but Kate was too taken up with the grave beautiful face and soft sweet voice to hear the innuendo. Had she done so, she could not possibly have taken it as intended for her. Was not every one always glad to see her? A lonely artist invalid could never wish to drive away a young woman whom most people delighted to seek out!

"I suppose you are living at the farm there, then?" she said, compassionately, and pointing to a cluster of dark red chimneys just visible above a bend in the lane. "But how dull it must be for you if you are ill! I hope you have plenty of books, and that you are not alone."

"Yes; I am alone," said the lady; "but I have plenty of books—at least, for the present; and I do not care about society."

This was plainer, and Kate felt hurt. Yet surely those sweet blue eyes could not mean to look cold!

"Then I suppose you would not care to see us," she said, in a rather offended tone, and getting up as she spoke. "I was going

to have asked you to come over to see us when you felt stronger; or—But perhaps you would rather not.”

“Yes, I would rather not,” said the lady, quietly. “But I thank you very much for your kindness in thinking of it. I am not strong enough for visiting, or receiving visitors,” she added, in a firmer tone.

Kate was thoroughly affronted.

“Good afternoon,” she said, flushing very much. “I am sorry I interrupted your work.” And then she walked off very briskly, and with her head mightily erect. The young lady had been snubbed!

The artist sat looking after her with a half-sigh half-smile on her pale lips. “I am afraid I was rude,” she murmured, “and it was kindly meant; but the name startled me; and, for anything I know, it might be the girl of whom I have so often heard. Combe Regis? Yes; that was the place they were going to; and I had no idea it was within miles of this. Had I better go away, I wonder? But I have so little strength, and it seems as if wherever I went I stumbled upon somebody who knows me. Besides, *she* evidently does not know me. She may not be in any way connected with those people. Combe Regis may be a favorite watering-place in these parts, though I don’t know of it. I had better stay here: I *must* stay here till I get stronger. The doctor said if I did not take perfect rest I should have a nervous fever; and how dreadful to be laid up with that here! I do not think she will ever come near me again, whoever she is” (and she smiled sadly); “but what a pretty impetuous creature the girl was! It went to my heart to check her cordiality as I did. There! the sun has gone down now, so I had better put up my paints, and go home.”

Kate, meanwhile, was well on her way to Combe Regis. She was walking very quickly, and the red was still high in her cheeks. Also she breathed hard, and was altogether in a state of lively indignation, which did not begin to subside till she was within sight of the roofs and chimney-pots of the little seaside village.

And then Kate put the stranger out of her mind, and hurried home briskly, for there was the cart standing at the door. It was not till night time, when the girls were going to bed, that Madge exclaimed:

“Why, Kate, where is your other earring? You’ve only one in.”

Kate put up her hand with a quick gesture, and uttered a corresponding cry of annoyance.

“It must have dropped out,” she said. “When did I feel it last? O, just after crossing that brook. It caught in my ruffle, and I twitched it away. Good gracious! I hope it didn’t drop among the grass there.”

## CHAPTER XX.

### MRS. GREY AGAIN.

It certainly was not in the cottage, for Kate searched it both that evening and next morning; and the more she thought of it, the more the conviction grew upon her that it must have dropped out either when she gave it that hasty twitch, or when she was stooping to pick up the artist’s paints. In that case she would have to go back for it; and the idea was not pleasant, more especially as Dick had started off for a day’s fishing; Madge’s foot, though better, was not up to any great exertion; and Dottie was too little for so long a walk.

“I must go alone,” Kate thought, with a little “moue” of disgust, “for I don’t want to lose it—such a pretty one; and poor papa’s last present, too; but I do hope and trust she won’t be there again.”

She was not. When Kate got near the spot, she stopped, and cast a timid glance downward towards the little knot of trees, and the glimmer of foaming water, beside which she had encountered the artist on the previous day. There did not seem to be any one there, or near there, at present; and, much reassured, she descended to the spot, and began searching for her lost trinket among the weeds and grasses where she had stood. It was not there; and after a search of at least ten minutes, she was just rising to go home without her earring, when there was a quick step behind her, and a voice, weak and breathless from haste, said:

“Are you looking for this? I found it after you were gone yesterday.”

Kate turned round sharply, and found herself face to face with her uncourteous friend of the previous day, but looking far more ill than then, the lips almost colorless, and dark lines round the beautiful blue eyes. Her voice was almost gone from weakness as she added:

“I saw you from a distance, and ran. I

was afraid you would be gone before—"

She stopped to pant; and Kate felt her righteous anger melting away in pity.

"Thank you," she said, trying to speak coldly. "I am sorry you had the trouble to come after me with it. I only missed it last night." And then she put out her hand for the little pearl earring, adding as she took it, "O what a pity! one of the drops is gone."

"Surely not. They were all there when I picked it up," said the lady; then, after a moment's pause to examine it, "Ah! it has come unhooked, I see. Very likely it is lying on my table now; for I picked it up in a hurry as I started. If you do not mind waiting a moment, I will go back and fetch it for you."

"I am very sorry to trouble you," said Kate. "Please let me go with you—that is, if you do not mind," her face flushing, and her voice unconsciously altering.

The invalid looked at her, first keenly, then smiling. There was something in those candid brown eyes—in the petulant curve of the sweet childlike mouth—in every line and dimple of Kate's frank fair face, which invited confidence and rebuked distrust. With an involuntary impulse for which she could not account even to herself, the stranger put out her thin white hand, and answered:

"I would gladly take more trouble for you; for I am afraid I was very rude to you yesterday. Will you forgive me?"

It was said so sweetly, and with such a look at once dignified and pleading, that Kate could not resist taking the offered hand in her little plump pink-tipped fingers, and pressing it cordially.

"Do not speak of it," she said. "You—that is, I had no right to—"

"To speak kindly to a lonely stranger," put in the lady, by way of assisting her confusion. "But I think it was very good and amiable of you; and I have been thinking so ever since I drove you away so ungraciously; but I have been so ill lately—I am so out of health now—and crushed by troubles of one sort and another, that I dread the very sight of mankind about me."

"But I am not mankind," said Kate, laughing.

She was quite appeased now.

"No, but—forgive me—young ladies generally bring mankind in their train—fathers, brothers, lovers and friends; and

though I am indeed so lonely that the sight of your face is very grateful to me, still I could not bear to be brought into contact with—"

"My train?" laughed Kate, very merrily; "but indeed you are wrong. I am quite a stranger down here, taking care of my two little sisters; and though I have one brother with me (the dearest fellow), I will not even tell him about you unless you like."

"Then you have not done so already?" said the lady, a look of almost grateful relief in her face.

Kate laughed again, and blushed into the bargain.

"No, because—well," in her impetuously truthful way, "because I was afraid I had made a fool of myself, and I thought Dick would tell me so; so I said nothing to any of them. Would you like me not to do so now?"

"You are so honest," said the lady, smiling. "Do you mind my being honest too, and saying 'yes?'"

They were at the gate leading to the farm, and the lady stopped and leant upon it, to gather breath before going further. Kate offered her arm, and was shocked to feel how the thin wrist trembled upon it, and how the hand burnt, as if with inward fever. Neither spoke till they stood in the tiny sitting-room the stranger tenanted, and then it was Kate who pulled forward a chair for its owner, and said, anxiously:

"I am afraid you are very ill. Let me get you a glass of water, or something." And suiting the action to the word, she hastily poured some water from a decanter standing on the table into a glass, and brought it to the invalid, who drank it eagerly, and then thanked her both with eyes and words.

"How very kind you are! But now that you see how much strength I have, you will not wonder at my shunning anything which can diminish it, and perhaps lay me up altogether. You do not know what it is to be very, very ill among strangers, and have no one who cares for you, no one you care for, near to speak a word of sympathy or comfort."

"No," said Kate, shivering at the mere idea. "I have never been alone anywhere in all my life. We are a large family at home, and mamma spoils us all. I am the most spoilt, however, because Dick (that's my eldest brother) spoils me too; and I

think I spoil myself. I always expect to have my own way in everything, and Eve often says I'm frightfully selfish, because I always do what pleases me first, without thinking whether it is pleasant to others. You saw that exemplified yesterday," and Kate laughed at herself now. The stranger looked at her very kindly.

"I think you would find it difficult to displease any one," she said. "Is Eve one of your sisters?"

"Yes; the next to me; but a boy comes in between. She is only fifteen, and very ill just now, poor darling! with scarlet fever. That is why we are down here. Mamma sent us away lest we should catch the infection, though I would much rather have stayed to nurse her. I tease poor Evy awfully about being cold and prim; but she is a million times better than I am, and never gets into scrapes."

Kate was not looking at her hostess, or she would have seen a change come over her face. The hectic spot was glowing in either cheek again, and there was a feverish brightness in her eyes, a forced quietness in her voice, as she said:

"You have not told me your name yet."

"Bellew," said Kate—"Kate Bellew; at least I was christened Katherine, but every one calls me Kate. My mother is Lady Margaret Bellew, and we live in London."

"I know—at least, I mean I have heard the name."

There was something faint and peculiar in the voice now, and Kate looked up curiously.

"Do you live in London also?" she said.

"Your face is so familiar to me that the more I look at it, the more I feel I must have seen it somewhere. Was it in the Row or—stay! I have a dim idea—was it not at one of Lady Vanborough's receptions?"

"I have been in London," said the lady, quietly—the expression of her face had changed. The lips were set firmly, and there was a sort of pathetic defiance in the eyes—"but I do not think I have ever met you at the Row, or receptions. Are you sure it is me of whom you are thinking, and not of a relative of mine?"

Kate looked puzzled.

"I have seen some one like you," she said, "and yet—"

"If it was at Lady Vanborough's, I think it must be Mrs. Grey you mean," said the

lady, coldly. "I did not know she had ever seen you, though."

"But I think I saw her once. Yes, it must have been she," Kate cried, quite delighted. "It was on the stairs, and I had only a glimpse of her; but I saw the likeness to you at once, though I had forgotten all about it. And so she is a relation of yours! How funny it seems? for Bee has spoken so much of her, and I have taken quite an interest in her myself."

"Indeed! Why? She is only Lady Vanborough's companion," said the invalid, still coldly.

"But Lady Vanborough praises her so much, and—that is not my reason, however, for caring about her," said Kate, honestly, "but because a gentleman, a great friend of my brother's, is in love with her, and being in love makes him so dreadfully disagreeable, that I have been wishing she would marry him. There comes out my selfishness, you see," added Kate, laughing; "but if you knew how unpleasant it is to have your friends always snapping at you because another woman is unkind to them!"

The invalid smiled, but in rather a chilly manner still.

"I think I have heard Mrs. Grey speak of something of the sort," she said, slowly; "but I thought the gentleman lived in the country, far from London. How can his snapping worry you?"

"Ah, you mean Mr. Philip Clive!" cried Kate. "Yes, Bee told me he was in love with her too; but I mean his brother Bernard, who lives in London, and—dear me! though, I have no right to be talking about him or the lady this way. It is very wrong of me. What a pity I can't think before I speak!" And poor Kate, who had been chattering away in her usual impulsive manner, checked herself abruptly, and almost bit her lips with vexation. The invalid put out a hand and stroked hers gently.

"Do not mind. It is a dangerous habit, though, and you do well to check it; but in this case you are quite safe, for, as I tell you, I see no one, and I will be very careful never to repeat a word you have said."

"Thank you," said Kate, dolefully; "but that doesn't make it less bad of me. Still, as you knew of it, it does not so much matter; and I wish you would advise your relation not to keep Mr. Clive in suspense much longer, for really, you know, it is very try-

ing to a man's temper." And Kate nodded her head as sagaciously as though she were the mother of a dozen sons.

"I am afraid my wishes and Mrs. Grey's opinions are too different for me to advise her," said the invalid, gently; "but are you sure Mr. Clive has told her that he—what you told me?"

Kate owned she was not sure, but said that she had taken it for granted.

"I think you are mistaken," her friend answered, gravely. "It is to be hoped so; though, indeed, it is to be hoped that you are mistaken altogether; for were you right, I know that Mrs. Grey would never give him the answer he would wish. She does not intend to marry again."

"She may change her mind," said Kate. "Ladies often do. I'm always changing mine."

"You are a very young girl, and Mrs. Grey is a woman past thirty in years alone, and nearer fifty in everything else," answered the invalid. "Besides, in this case she has no temptation to do so, for she feels nothing beyond the simplest liking, which you might have, for either of the people you have spoken of."

"If she doesn't like Mr. Clive more than I do!" cried Kate, lifting her eyebrows and clasping her hands with an emphasis which said far more than the words—"But there! I am forgetting again. I can't think what is the matter with me to-day, or whether it is something in you which makes me inclined to chatter at this rate. Good-by. May I come and see you again when the picture is finished?"

"You may come whenever you like, or whenever you are good enough," the invalid answered, heartily.

"And I suppose I may not bring my sisters? I don't think you are strong enough for Madge. She is noisier than I am, and if she fell in love with you she would certainly bring Dick to share it; but if little Dottie could walk so far—"

"I should like to see her very much," answered the invalid; and then Kate shook hands and departed. It was not until she had left the lane behind, and climbed half way up the hill, that she remembered she did not even know her new friend's name.

She had forgotten to ask it, and the other had, perhaps, forgotten to tell it; but, indeed, the more Kate thought of her visit the more she realized how very communica-

tive she had been, and how very limited were the communications she had received in return. She had prattled away about everything—herself, her sisters' names and character and station, about Lady Vanborough and Mr. Clive, and, worst of all, the stranger's own relation, Lady Vanborough's companion; and in return the stranger had—listened to her! It was rather mortifying, but Kate could not remember a single item of information which she had gathered from the invalid, save and excepting the fact that she was related to Mrs. Grey. "Which I might have guessed by the likeness," thought Miss Bellew, with a renewed perception of that unpleasant sensation. "Well, never mind; the next time I will ask questions and nothing more. I don't think she would repeat anything I said to-day. She looks too perfect a lady to take advantage of my foolishness. I wonder what she is, by the way, and who she is. She spoke of being 'only a companion,' rather scornfully; but she does not give me the idea of being rich herself. Perhaps Mrs. Grey is her sister, and they have lost all their money. Perhaps she is a governess. Bahl! I might go on guessing all day, and never come near the truth. I will ask her plainly and frankly next time I see her; and meanwhile, even if I have been hasty in rushing into an acquaintance with a person I know nothing about, and who mayn't be in our set at all, still it can't do any harm so long as she doesn't visit us, and I don't bring the others into it. I must be very careful in what I say; for she is so lovely that I am sure Dick would fall in love with her if he were to see her; and then mamma would be angry with me."

Acting on which wise resolution, Kate merely answered to Madge's queries as to what had kept her so long, by saying she had been talking to a poor sick woman at a farm, and changed the conversation. The young lady was not fond of prevarication as a rule; it made her face burn.

In the meanwhile Mrs. Grey (for, pre-supposing I have no idiots among my readers, I see no use in keeping up a mystery as to the identity of that lady with the lodger at the farm before them) was battling with her conscience certain doubts which the interview with Kate had evoked. Thanks to Lady Vanborough's volubility of speech, Miss Bellew had told her very little that she did not know before, but that little was of



use to her, even as confirming Lady Vanborough; and being of use to her, she, as an honorable woman, felt annoyed with herself for having obtained it by a deception.

We are apt to say that women have no ideas of honor. I disagree with that theory *in toto*. Their perceptions on that subject, as on most others, are equally keen and far more subtle than the generality of ours. The only thing is that, being weaker than men, they sometimes lack force of character enough to carry these perceptions into practice. This is a broad statement, and requires explanation. Being informed by my editor, however, that space is valuable, and explanations are—not, I leave them to be worked out by yourself, and proceed.

“I am afraid it was not fair,” thought Mrs. Grey; “and yet if I had said to her, ‘I am Mrs. Grey,’ she might have said just what she did, or even more. Besides, would that have been any truer than what I did say? Because I have been obliged to take a name which is not my own, am I bound to keep to it? Why, even if she had recognized me (and when she saw me I cannot fancy) and had addressed me as Mrs. Grey, I should have kept more strictly to the literal truth by saying, ‘That is not my name,’ than by assenting to it. I am not to be judged as other women—I, whose whole life is a martyrdom to the villany of one man, and my own vain efforts to walk straightly away from, and in spite of him. And to think that I was once as happy and innocent as that pretty talkative child! May God help me! for at times my cross seems heavier than I can carry of my own strength. There seems to be a fate against me of late, since go where I may I cannot be left alone, or spared the notice of those very people whom I would most avoid.”

And then she covered up her face with her hands and broke into silent sorrowful weeping. A strong woman, but broken both in mind and health now by troubles which, however they might be her own bringing in the beginning, were in very truth too heavy for one so gentle-minded and gently reared to bear alone.

Clive's last speech had indeed been a fearful shock to her. She had reasons, great and grave ones, for keeping her past life a sealed book to those among whom she had settled herself in the present one. She would fain have buried and blotted it out altogether, since even to think of it revived

such a poignancy of anguish, such an agony of shame, as nearly broke her heart again. And now to find that the man, whose obstinate love for her had become more a persecution than anything else, had carried his search for her so far as to obtain a clue, God knew how strong or how slight, to that very past from which she had escaped, brought down the long-hoarded strength and courage at a blow, and for a few hours left her too crushed and helpless even for tears. On that day, after Clive saw her at Lady Vanborough's, she sat in her own room with her hands clasped on her knees, and her blank unseeing eyes fixed on vacancy, till the setting sun, shining full upon her white face through the lower panes of her window, roused her to the consciousness of the duties she had neglected, the suffering she had to encounter. The duties had to be remembered first; and rising to her feet with tottering limbs, she rang the bell, and desired the maid who answered it to apologize to Lady Vanborough for her long absence, but that she was suffering from such a terrible headache, she had been quite unable to come down.

“Tell Mrs. Grey I don't want her,” said Lady Vanborough in answer. “Take her up a cup of strong tea at once, and tell her not to show herself till her headache is quite gone.” And then the baronet's widow laughed to herself, and told herself—which was true—that she was a very good-natured creature. “Some lovers' quarrel, of course. Perhaps Master Clive is jealous—he looks as if he could be—and the silly woman has been crying her eyes out. Fancy a woman older than myself, if anything, and such a fool! Why, I couldn't squeeze out a tear for such a small matter as the best man ever born, to save my life. I'm sure they are not worth it; and that's why they always ill-use the women who make most fuss about them. I must go up and scold the silly creature before she has time to stiffen up into propriety again.”

And accordingly, while Mrs. Grey, having drunk her tea, was trying painfully, with throbbing brain and aching heart, to think what she should do to preserve her secret—whether she should trust to Clive's impartial friendship, and owning that there was something hidden, implore him to persuade his brother not to pursue his discoveries; or whether she should rely on Philip's wounded pride, and simply write him

the letter Bernard had suggested—Lady Vanborough came into the room, told her that she looked like a death's head, and that she was an absurd goose to make herself miserable about nothing, and accused her of having quarrelled with her lover.

"My—I do not understand you, Lady Vanborough," Mrs. Grey said, a look of mild offence upon her face.

"Yes, my dear, you do," answered her employer, turning her back to the fire, gentleman-fashion, and putting her hands under her tunic in default of coat-tails; "here is Bernard Clive desperately in love with you, and as proud as a peacock; and here are you, I haven't the least doubt, desperately in love with him, and prouder than any peahen that ever laid an egg—which, by the way, isn't saying much, for I've always thought peahens rather tame-spirited creatures than otherwise. Now, I don't know what you've been quarrelling about; but I suppose he wants to get married—and very natural too. A sensible rising young man like he is, wants a wife, and I don't see, if he can keep her, why he shouldn't have her. What's the good of shilly-shallying? You'll have to give in sooner or later; and if you care for him, I'd advise you to do it sooner. I know there are plenty of wisly-washy sort of men, who wouldn't know what to do with their own wills if they were let have 'em, and who want to be ridden with a curb; but Clive's not one of that sort. He's gone out of the house in a boiling passion now; and let me tell you, my dear, that if you take it out of some men before marriage, they'll take it out of you afterwards."

"But I am not going to be married to Mr. Clive," said Mrs. Grey, her pale face flushing painfully. "He has been a most kind friend to me, and I like and respect him; but I would no more marry him than you would."

"He never paid me the compliment of asking me," said Lady Vanborough, dryly.

"Nor me," added Mrs. Grey. "Will you believe me, Lady Vanborough, when I assure you such an idea has never crossed my mind? Even when you have jested about Mr. Clive at times, I paid no attention, thinking it was only your—"

"Flippant manner of speech," suggested her ladyship, as Mrs. Grey hesitated. "Complimentary to me, eh? Of course I believe you, since you say so, though I

shouldn't have thought you so dense; but now you do know it—"

"I think you are mistaken."

"What! when I got it from him before ever I saw you?" (It is worthy of mention that Lady Vanborough fully believed that she had. Her imagination was vivid, and by the time she had put it into words five or six times she began to believe in it as a reality.) She added in the same manner, "Why, the only wonder to me is, you did not know it. It was only the other day some friend of his—who was it? O, Kate Bellew, to be sure—was talking about it to me. If that is all you fear, put it aside. Do you suppose people run after and devote themselves to women who can't make them any return, as he does with you, unless they're in love with them? Bah! my dear, the world's not so unselfish as all that, and you ought to know it as well as I."

Mrs. Grey said nothing for a minute. Her head was whirling, her pulse beating in quick feverish throbs under this accumulation of trouble on trouble and perplexity on perplexity. When she did look up, it was to say in a tone of patient despair:

"If this be true, I have lost my best friend. Lady Vanborough, you have opened my eyes; will you let me leave you? Had I known this, I should never have taken this situation. Knowing it, I should be wrong in keeping it."

"Look here," said Lady Vanborough. A new idea had flashed across her mind, and brought a heavy frown across her kindly face. Her hands left their gentlemanly pose, and took the other widow's in a firm grasp. "Tell me the truth. A woman is not to be utterly condemned because she is under a cloud. Is your *real* name Mrs. Grey?"

And Mrs. Grey made no answer; but the face a moment back flushed in appeal faded into a dead whiteness, and the hands Lady Vanborough held had turned as cold and damp as stone. With one keen look at her, her ladyship let them go, and turned away.

"I will not keep you against your will," she said, "nor will I tarn you adrift. Tomorrow I am going away on a fortnight's visit to some friends in Kent. You can either stay here, or go to your friends—as you like; and when I return, if you like to tell me your story, I will do my best to help you as a friend can."

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

## A PRETTY YOUNG LADY.

### A TALE OF HOME LIFE.

BY THEO. GIFT.

#### CHAPTER XXI.

##### KATE TAKES OFFENCE.

At about six o'clock on the day he was expected, Clive arrived at Bloom Cottage, and received a very cordial welcome from Dick, and a sufficiently friendly one from Dick's sister. He looked tired, and had that pale overworked expression which people luxuriating in country air and exercise recognize at once, and which woke a feeling of pity in Kate's kindly little heart.

"I am sorry I said anything against him," she thought to herself, with a quick remorseful twinge. "Poor fellow! he looks quite ill; and mamma is always so kind and cordial to him. I must take her place, and try to keep him good-tempered. I dare say he won't quarrel if I am careful to avoid occasions."

He certainly did not seem inclined to do so. There was a sort of languor about him, which appeared to dispose him to rest gratefully, in the kindly welcome and homely chit-chat which surrounded him at the cottage. Kate quite wondered when she saw his eyes following her about the room, with almost as pleased and pleasant an expression as shone so often in Dallas McKenzie's. She had not thought those hard blue eyes could look so soft; and then her mind went back to Bee Vanborough's story; and the young heart, just sufficiently touched itself to feel for others' romances, melted still more.

"Why does not that Mrs. Grey marry him?" Kate asked herself with a little indignation. "Bee must know better than that relation living at a distance; and if she does like him, it is her duty to say so instead of holding back and playing with him. A woman has no right to use her beauty to give pain; and I would just like to tell her so," added the younger beauty, with an energetic pat of Dottie's golden mane, as she lifted that small lady into her chair for dinner. She never guessed that Clive's gaze rested on her in genuine pleasure and admiration, untouched by any thought of other

women. In town he did often find fault with her; and in his eagerness to see her perfect, according to his ideas of perfection, quarrelled with her for the thousand and one little imperfections which made her so irresistibly charming; but to-day she was perfect, even in his eyes. To-day, watching her as she flitted about in her simple linen dress, with the sunlight on her pretty hair—now seeing after the preparations for their homely meal, and making most ludicrous mistakes in the directions thereof; now tying up Madge's wind-loosened locks; and now stooping to tease and fondle her tiny sister—she became, as it were, the very embodiment of his own ideal of womanhood, the home sunbeam, and bright ministering spirit, unspoiled by tarnish of falsity or worldliness, which more men than Bernard Clive have yearned for in their inmost spirit.

Kate considered herself "frightfully sunburnt," and was rather uneasy as to whether Dick might not think she should have dressed for dinner in honor of his friend; but to Clive the slight tinge of brown on brow and cheek harmonized like the mellow glow of sunlight, with the dancing eyes and rich-colored masses of wavy hair; and as to the dress—Well, now I think of it, it is really a little hard and disheartening for our lasses, that let them dress their finest, stuff out their hair over innumerable pads and rolls, and deck their pretty figures in yards and yards of satin, or pyramids of frills and flounces, the very men for whom they take all this trouble never will think them looking so well as in a clean cotton gown—never will fancy any shape of the head so beautiful as that nature has made for it. It is disheartening; but O, young ladies, it is a most tender and subtle compliment to your own persons. The men may be fools, but they prefer you to your clothes—*voilà tout!*

This is a digression. Excuse it, and allow me to continue.

The evening passed very pleasantly. No business was talked of, after all; Clive even

declining, on plea of fatigue, to go out for a smoke with his friend Dick; and at eight o'clock they were still sitting near the uncurtained window, Kate busy with her crochet, and Clive telling her something about Lady Margaret, who seemed to have been using him as a sort of adopted son during their absence, when a gentleman passed along the beach below them; and seeing, by the glow of lamp and firelight, Kate's white dress at the window, lifted his hat. Kate did not see him—she was looking at Clive; but she fairly started, his face turned so dark with angry surprise.

"Dick!" he cried, sharply, and stooping forward—"look there! Isn't that the Canadian fellow—M'Kenzie? What business on earth has he down here?"

It was merely a hasty exclamation, somewhat imperiously uttered; but it fell like a bombshell into the happy little family circle, a moment back so happy and peaceful; and Kate's face glowed in an instant with the deepest indignation, while George, who had been lying on the floor, trying to touch his forehead with the tips of his toes, as suddenly writhed into a kneeling position, with cheeks distended and eyes glaring with wrath. Dick did not answer for a second; but his sister saved him the trouble by drawing herself as erect as if she had literally and indeed swallowed the proverbial poker; and turning upon the visitor with her customary promptitude:

"Yes, Mr. Clive—that is Mr. M'Kenzie," she said, her clear tones resonant of unuttered defiance. "Why should not he have business here as well as other people? Surely he has a right to come and go where he likes without—"

And here Kate began to remember the obligations of courtesy, and checked herself, swelling, like a ridiculous young turkey-cock, with the words she longed to have added.

Clive raised his eyebrows. To speak the truth, he had been as much startled by the effect of his words, as his audience by the words themselves. M'Kenzie's appearance had surprised and annoyed him; and he spoke on the impulse of the moment, forgetting that Kate was present; but to have his words taken up by her, and flung back to him with such indignant warmth, was a sign to him that he had more warrant for annoyance than he supposed. It was like a gust of hail in your face on a warm sum-

mer's day—like a throb of sharp pain shooting across a healthy limb; and yet he did not feel as angry with the actual hand which dealt it, as with the ideal Kate, who had once again disappointed him. He punished her by that look of calm astonishment before turning to Dick with:

"What has brought him down here, did you say, Bellew?"

"George, and the bother he gave, I believe," said Dick, trying to laugh, but looking rather embarrassed; while poor little Kate sat nearly petrified with angry wonder at being thus ignored. "He took George in, you know, when he came down here; and—"

"Took him in! No, I didn't know," said Clive, looking more disturbed than before. "What did he do that for? I thought you were all together down here."

"Really, Mr. Clive," cried Kate, unable to hold her tongue, however undignified speech might be, "I don't mean to be rude, but I think you can't be aware how funny your speeches sound. Surely you don't expect us—"

"Now, Kittie, be quiet," put in Dick, "or Clive will think I've not been taking proper care of you. He doesn't know as well as I what a volcano you are, always ready to go off with a fizz about nothing—nothing at all," added the brother, nodding his head at Bernard as if to apologize for Kate, or assure him that there was no special cause for her championship of the absent Canadian.

"Well, Dick, you needn't call Mr. M'Kenzie 'nothing,'" cried George, coming to his sister's side. "I'm sure he's a regular trump. He came down here on purpose to please me. I believe he'd do anything for me; and he's rowed Kate out three times, and carried Dottie out walking when she was tired, and read aloud those jolly Ingol—what's-its-name's legends all yesterday evening. Didn't he, Katie? You know the book I mean—about the devil who 'dragged his nerveless tail all along of the Red Sea shore;' and we all like him immensely—better than any one else we know. You said so to-day, didn't you, Kate?"

"A happy man," said Clive, with a curl of his lip, which brought the red blood burning into Kate's cheek. "Well, I think I must be saying good-night. Dick, will you smoke your cigar as far as the inn with me?"

This of course meant, "Dick, will you come out and discuss this intruder where we can't be interrupted by Miss Bellew and George;" but though Kate so understood it, she could offer no remonstrance, and merely clenched her little hands together in impotent vexation, while Dick went to look for his overcoat.

Clive hesitated. He was quite aware that he had angered Kate, and that he was going to do so still more. It was his own fault; and yet it was for her sake, and to save her from pain; only no one but he knew that; and though he piqued himself on not "spoiling her like the rest of the world," he could not but feel to the very core the change from the bright soft cordiality of a few minutes back to the present wrathful coldness. With a wistful, almost pleading look in his eyes, he leant forward to Kate.

"Don't be angry with me, Miss Bellew. I was sorry to find Mr. McKenzie established here, because I don't think him a very desirable friend for you; but I had no intention of saying so when I first spoke, and less still of offending you."

"Offending me?" repeated Kate, too angry to see the appeal in Clive's eyes, and still further irritated by the unfortunate words; "you have only a little surprised me, Mr. Clive. I thought men were incapable of small jealousies, and also that ladies with mothers and brothers to take care of them, were not expected to consult their young men acquaintances as to who were desirable friends for them."

Clive was silent for a moment.

"That is a most crushing reprimand," he said, very slowly and quietly; "but provided that the mother is far away, and the young man acquaintance (not such a very young man either, Miss Bellew) finds the lady in perfect innocence adopting as a friend, a woman of doubtful character, or a man of undesirable antecedents, I think most people would absolve him of officious interference were he to give her brother a word of warning on the subject."

"Which is what you would do in such a case, I suppose," said Kate, half incredulously.

"Which is what I would do in such a case—yes," answered Clive, coolly.

"And on the sole conjecture that, because you have seen Mr. McKenzie on the beach, Madge and I must have adopted him as an

intimate friend? Mind," added Kate, stoutly, "I do not say we have not."

"I am glad you don't. Thank God you are as yet as candid as you are imprudent and unkind," cried Clive, losing self-control for one moment in ungovernable pain; and then he turned sharply away, and went out just as Dick called from the cottage door to know why he was delaying.

Madge and George had taken themselves off in disgust; but as soon as Clive was gone they returned, to find their eldest sister staring out of the window at the broad expanse of moonlit silvery sea, and giving vent every now and then to a suspicious little sniffle.

"Why, Kittie, you're crying!" cried Madge, taking a look at her. "What's the matter? Has Mr. Clive been vexing you? Why, your face is as red as fire, and your nose is all swelled—isn't it, George? Do look at Kate's nose. What is the matter?"

"I wish you would look at one another's noses," said Kate, petulantly. "Nothing is the matter, and Mr. Clive is always vexing me and every one else. I never yet met such a disagreeable person."

"I like Bernard Clive generally," said George with the ponderous gravity of a judge—"at least I used to did; but I should just have liked to have punched his head jolly well just now. Calling Dallas McKenzie a 'fellow' indeed! I should like to know what he is! I say, Kate, I'm hungry."

"Hungry! just at your bedtime!" cried Kate, rallying herself, and rather ashamed of having betrayed her feelings before the children. "It's half past nine; and tomorrow's Sunday. Now, George I won't have you going to the cupboard."

"Only a little bit, Katie, there's a darling angel. Just see what a cavity there is here"—clasping his hands pathetically on his stomach—"I shall go into a consumption before we go home."

"A consumption of food, I suppose," said Kate, satirically. "O yes, I'm always a darling angel when you want to get anything out of me. And as to the cavity, that's a cram, sir, for your heart is all there and nowhere else."

"I wish it was a cram," grumbled George, "then I shouldn't feel so empty. Aren't you hungry, Madge?"

Madge nodded, and observed in a modest aside that there was plenty of the currant

start left. "You gave such little company-bits at dinner, Kate."

"Why didn't you ask for more, then?" asked Kate, sighing but yielding, and reaching her hand to the bell.

"Because Mr. Clive said you must be tired of helping so many. How I do hate people to say that when one hasn't had half enough! I say, Katie, do you remember Eve thought he would want to marry you when he first came?"

"Yes, I remember," said Kate, giving her head a toss of disdain at the idea. "Eve was out of her gues."

"O gracious! I hope you wont," cried George, looking up from his plate of pie. "Look here, Kittie, why don't you marry M'Kenzie? He's ever such a much better fellow; and I'd come and live with you, and he could teach me to swim; and it's much jollier doing my Latin with him than with old Smith."

"What a goose you are, George!" said Madge, while Kate grew rosy-red and bit her lips. "As if Kate would have you to live with her if she was married! Nurse says it's a great mistake to go and live with young married people; for they never like being advised, and—"

"Madge, I do wish you wouldn't talk such nonsense," cried poor Kate in desperation. "How would you like any one to hear you? Now, have you both finished?"

"But, Kate, it is not all nonsense," persisted Madge, clearing the juice out of her plate with laborious care. "Mr. M'Kenzie does like you. I asked him, and he said so; and I asked him if you were not much nicer than Miss Marryatt, and he said you were nicer than any girl he'd ever met; so why shouldn't you get married?"

"Ah! why shouldn't you? There, now!" added George, with clenching severity.

Kate took him by the shoulders and gave him a little shake.

"I wish you would go to bed, both of you," she said, half laughing, half crying. "I never saw such a couple of children for talking of what you don't understand. 'Get married' indeed!"—repeating Madge's phrase with vast scorn—"I suppose you think I am bound to marry every one who likes me; and that I have nothing to do but to order anybody I like to marry me. If that is the sort of way you talk to Mr. M'Kenzie, I shall not let you be with him."

"I'm going back to London with him, so you can't stop me," sang George, turning a summersault before making a bolt up stairs to his bedroom; and Madge followed, after asking Kate if she were coming too.

"No," said Kate, "I am going to sit up for Dick, and tack the clean frills into your jacket. Martin has been too busy to do it."

Kate might intend to sit up for Dick; but as that young gentleman stayed out till past two in the morning, and she was already tired by a five miles' walk that day, her endurance was not equal to her intentions; wherefore, after a couple of hours of very lonely and unhappy expectation (Kate was never a lover of solitude), she betook herself to bed, making up her mind to be down early and ask Dick what Mr. Clive had said the first thing in the morning. What could he have to say against Mr. M'Kenzie, a man so gentle-mannered, quiet and intellectual—a gentleman older than himself, and equally well-born? Why, it was preposterous! it was a miserable jealousy and love of detraction. Kate almost hated Bernard Clive at that moment; yet she did not quite believe him to be what her accusations involved.

It must be only his dislike to herself which made Clive set himself against the friends she cared for. "And yet why should he dislike me so much?" thought Kate. "I have never done anything to him. I would even have been friends with him if he would have let me; but he wont. He makes me rude and passionate whenever I see him; and when I am feeling quite sorry for him, and kind, he snubs me and speaks as if—O, I can't bear him; and I almost hope Bee's beautiful Mrs. Grey wont marry him; for I am sure he would make her utterly miserable."

With which charitable conclusion Kate fell asleep, and was not even disturbed by the sound of Dick's coming up stairs, and banging to his bedroom door with his usual thoughtlessness, at the unholy hour aforementioned.

She had forgotten in her arrangements for the morrow that, however early she might be down, Dick was by no means certain to follow her example; more especially as the day was Sunday, and he had been in bed so late the night before. As it turned out, he did not even get up for church, but had his breakfast sent up stairs to him;

and George, who had been over to the inn bright and early, reported that he had seen nothing at all of Clive, but that Mr. McKenzie had said he had had a very stupid day away from them all, and had sent Kate a cluster of roses from his friend's greenhouse.

Those roses did Kate good. It was not like her to "let the sun go down on her wrath," and to warm it up with the morning orb was well-nigh impossible. The bitterness of Clive's words faded with the night, and the heat of her own humiliated her. After all, he was a lawyer, a cold hard man; but he might have meant well. Perhaps Mr. McKenzie had offended him once on a time; or perhaps had some discreditable relatives whom Clive (being, as she knew, terribly proud and stand-alooft) could not dissociate from himself.

"He might not have said anything if I had not been so touchy," Kate thought, with mortified candor; "and then I dare say I irritated him to say more than he meant. No one could really dislike Mr. McKenzie who knew him; but they are so utterly unlike, it would be difficult for them to get on well. I must manage to bring them together, and make them like one another. But O, how provoking not to be able to see Dick before going to church! Mr. Clive must have had a great deal to say to keep him out so late; but what a shame to say anything against Dallas McKenzie when he is so good and kind, and so different from other men!" And Kate fell to sniffing her roses with a second little glow of gentle indignation.

It is a common mistake in humanity to imagine that whatever is deeply interesting to us must as deeply interest other people. Kate was thinking a great deal about Dallas McKenzie at present; and therefore, like a little fool, she fancied everybody else's mind must be similarly occupied. And Dick, like Kate, was so taken up with his own less innocent and more complicated affairs, that he imagined Clive's visit must have reference to them alone, and was impatient to get out of doors to discuss them with him. His first question, as they turned into the village street, was an eager—

"Well, old fellow, and what about that girl?"

The only "girl" occupying Clive's mind at that moment was Kate. He was just

thinking how pretty she looked even when she was angry, and wondering within himself whether he should judge her angriness as harshly as he had done if it had been evoked in his defence, not Mr. McKenzie's. He started when Dick spoke, and repeated "Girl?" half vaguely.

"Yes, you know whom I mean," replied Dick, impatiently—"Fanny Greypole, my young woman, and be hanged to her! Have you seen her again?"

## CHAPTER XXII.

### DICK'S LOVE AFFAIR.

CLIVE turned round, roused from his own thoughts in an instant, and putting them away, as was customary with him, answered, promptly:

"Yes, I have. And now, Dick, what do you mean to do about her?"

Dick shuffled and swore. Poor fellow! it was not to be wondered at that he so often sought refuge in strong language, for there was nothing else strong about him—not even his passions. His very viciousness was so weak, that if the power of resisting it had not been weaker still, he might have been a most innocuous member of society. Unfortunately, however, the negative qualities permissible in a woman are not sufficient for the lords of creation. It is possible for her to pass through life without a single noble thought—a single virtuous or unselfish action—and yet neither be guilty of positive hurt to herself or those around her; but in man an utter impotence for good implies in itself a certain potency for evil, both to himself and those connected with him. Dick's career was a proof thereof.

"You will have to do something, I am afraid," said Clive, quietly. "She evidently considers you as engaged to her; and as she has lost a good match on your account, the mother is as evidently determined not to let you get off scatheless."

Dick alluded to Mrs. Greypole in terms which, had that lady overheard, she might have been tempted to carry into application by proving that her "bark was worse than her bite."

They had reached the door of the inn, and were looking down the steep narrow street, with the moonbeams glittering on every point and inequality in the rough pavement, and sleeping in a broad splash of

silver on the waters of the cove beneath. Heavy masses of black cloud were moving slowly across the dark blue sky, and had thrown a dark band of shadow athwart the middle distance of the scarcely breathing sea; but beyond that again lay a thin streak of white, in the centre of which floated a tiny bark, every spar, block and rope of which seemed to have been fashioned out of frosted silver by a fairy shipwright. Here and there a faint twinkle of light just reddened the window of some cottage whose inhabitants were more wakeful than the rest; and in some distant yard a dog was barking at intervals in a short jerking way, as if it wanted to get free; but otherwise all was very still—very silent; and the two young men in their well-cut clothes, and with their fair gentlemanly faces, looked strangely out of keeping with the primitive rusticity of the scene around, and the quaint old-fashioned porch, with its peaked roof and red-tiled floor, of the old hostelry behind them.

They were just passing an open door in the little whitewashed raftered passage leading to Clive's room; and in the act of stooping to put his boots outside, his handsome features clearly relieved against the square of light behind, stood Dallas M'Kenzie.

"Ah, Bellew! Good-evening. How are you all up at the cottage?" he said, in his bright genial way; and then, as his eye fell on Clive, he bowed, adding more coldly, "Mr. Clive, I suppose. I heard you were expected to-day."

"Yes—I have been promising my friend Lady Margaret and her son here to run down every day this week," Clive answered, as stiffly, and not sorry to show that his visit was not without due authority. "But I am surprised to meet you. What can have made you leave town just as the people are coming back to it?"

"Partly from a whim, partly as nurse," M'Kenzie answered, laughing. "The season and its votaries are not such potent charmers for me as for you young Londoners. Good-night."

And then he went inside, and the two young men passed on.

"Do you like him?" Clive asked. "I suppose, since you are so intimate, you do."

"O yes—pretty well. He's more a woman's man than one of us, you know—always looking after the girls and playing

with Dottie, and that sort of thing. Rather he than I, say I, where children are concerned; but I expect he got tired of Master George, and came down here in the hope of getting rid of him."

Clive sneered slightly. His opinion of Dick's penetration was below mediocrity.

"Do you know anything about him and his antecedents?" he asked.

"I know he belongs to the M'Kenzies of Glen Ruthie, and was in the Royal Engineers till he sold out. You met him in America, didn't you? so you ought to know more of him than I do. What was he up to then? and is there anything against him?"

Clive hesitated. He did know more of Dallas M'Kenzie, much that was against him in his own opinion, still more against his forming an intimacy with the Miss Bellevues, and perhaps (it was a horrible idea; but George had suggested, and Kate's blushes confirmed it) winning the affections of the eldest girl. Five minutes ago he had been prompt to speak his knowledge, and warn Dick against encouraging a friendship with the Canadian; but during those five minutes a multitude of considerations had occurred to his mind, and stayed him in the very act of speaking. These reports so prejudicial to M'Kenzie, how had he heard them? In a lawyer's office among lawyers, and therefore to be considered as in some sort confidential; and jested about in idle gossip at the bar of an American hotel! Again, might they not have been incorrectly stated; and therefore, if hastily repeated, to be upset as unworthy of credence, however well founded at bottom? Again, was his motive pure from beginning to end in thus raking them up again to the man's disadvantage, and when the latter was leading a life honorable and respected among his fellow-men?

These were three important questions.

To solve them in three seconds was impossible. Only this was clear to him. Until he could feel implicit confidence in himself, he ought not to ask Dick to put confidence in him, especially to the detriment of a third person.

"I do not know much of him," he said, slowly. "I met him once or twice only. He had just returned from Mexico then; and there were some unpleasant rumors about him and a Canadian lady. It is possible, however, that they were totally un-



founded. Go on with what you were telling me about yourself first."

Dick obeyed, nothing loth. He always preferred the subject of himself to that of other people; and if there were anything shady against M'Kenzie, it would be easy to drop him any day. Of that gentleman's feelings, or of Kate's, or of the possibility of such feelings being connected with one another, Dick never thought; it was not his way. Leaning both elbows on the table, and filling himself a stiffish glass of brandy and water, he went full tilt into his own troubles as linked with the fascinations of Miss Greypole.

Shall I give you the story in his words? I think not: it might be less wearisome in mine.

Fanny Greypole was the daughter of a well-to-do grocer and churchwarden, and had been early sent to "a college for young ladies," and taught to play the piano and speak French, until Mr. Greypole's sudden failure and death brought her home to a new order of things, and a less pleasant one than the old. Fortunately the widow was a woman of energy. She at once gave up her house, sold the fixtures, and taking a less expensive residence, put an advertisement in the daily papers of "board and lodging for a respectable single man of good position, or two brothers."

"Fanny must be married off quick," said Mrs. Greypole, "and married respectable. There's nothing like boarders for falling in love; and 'taint easy to play the fool with a young woman when her mother's got you both under her own nose."

Good reasoning! Unfortunately, however, Fanny did not remain under her mother's nose as desired; and it avails little having a right theory if the practice be not in unison with it. Fanny was a rather superior, very pretty and very self-willed girl. The first boarder, an unexceptionably respectable young man, fell in love with her at once; Fanny fell out with him on some trifle or another; Mrs. Greypole took the lover's part; and Fanny—took herself away. She went to Lady Caroline Beaumont at Daulish Park, the grand lady of the neighborhood, and with whose house she had got well acquainted in her childhood, during visits paid to her aunt, who had been for thirty years Lady Caroline's housekeeper; and she managed to establish herself there as part lady's-maid part companion to the

Hon. Miss Beaumont, a chronic invalid with a spinal complaint, which kept her a perpetual prisoner to the sofa, and not unfrequently to her room. For such a person something rather different from the ordinary h-dropping, idealess waiting-maid was really needful; and Fanny—who could read aloud and do hair with an equal dash, who knew all sorts of songs, and could sing them in a very fair voice, who could make dresses, and chatter vivaciously—became quite a godsend to the poor sufferer, and was made so much of by her, that the young woman found her situation, albeit twanging of the menial, infinitely more agreeable than a shabby back parlor, plenty of housework, and mother's scoldings, in the dingy street of a dingy country town.

It became still more agreeable after the arrival of Mr. Dick Bellew, on a visit to Lady Caroline during one of his summer vacations.

Besides her attendance on the invalid, Fanny had the special charge of accompanying Master Alick Beaumont, a child of seven, too restless for the nursery and too small for school, in his rambles in the park; Lady Caroline having a well-founded suspicion that, if left to himself, he would immediately betake himself to make acquaintance with the new kicking horse in his father's stables, or the weeds at the bottom of the round pond. Dick went out one day to smoke a meditative cigar in the park also, and met Miss Greypole and her charge—the former radiant in white pique and pink ribbons, the latter gambolling in front—fell into conversation with her, was fascinated by her shy vivacity of speech, and fell headlong in love with her bright eyes and pretty face.

It was the work of ten minutes, but it was effectual. Dick had no appetite for dinner that day; and next morning he put on a new tie, pinned a moss rosebud in his buttonhole, and sallied forth into the park at an earlier hour of the morning than generally had the honor of seeing him out of bed.

Fanny returned from her excursion that day with a pink rosebud in her belt; and Master Alick was seedy from an over-surfet of sugar-plums, and "didn't remember" anything about his walk to amuse mamma with while she was dressing.

Dick had at first taken Miss Greypole for a visitor, in right of her smart clothes, and

white teeth and hands; and when he found that she was "only Isobel Beaumont's companion" (I am afraid Fanny said nothing about the hair-dressing or lady's-maid side of the matter), he merely gave fuller vent to his admiration, unchecked by dread of interference or cashiering from aristocratic father and mother. He meant nothing, of course, but to thoroughly enjoy himself; but he did mean that, and in laying himself out for that end gave little thought to the character of the girl he had to deal with. In fact, the gentleman was too deeply in love just then to *think* much of anything, and made as great a fool of himself as young men of his ilk are in the habit of doing on such occasions. Now, Fanny was not in love at all. She had not even broken with the lodger at home, merely meaning to "bring him down a peg or two" by her absence, and assert her authority to rule once and for all by a severe exposition of the consequences of rebellion; but she was no less bent than her mother on making a "good" marriage; and being perfectly well acquainted with Dick's family and position, decided that he would make by far the better match of the two, and that to be Mrs. Bellew, and on visiting terms with the lady in whose service she was now living, was decidedly preferable to becoming the spouse of plain John Higginson, clerk in a wool-broker's office.

To this end she played her cards. I don't think I need enter into the particulars of the game. Those who have seen it played by a skillful hand require no description of moves equally hackneyed and efficacious; and for others I need simply remark that by a judicious use of her personal charms, and a judiciously alternated coldness, coquetry and yielding, Dick was not only brought to the pitch of a direct offer, but (greater triumph still) to confirm that offer in writing!

"Playing with you!" he wrote, when lashed to desperation by Fanny's coquetties—she having first worked him up little by little to a perfectly rampant state of affection; then, when he ardently pleaded for some return, having told him that he was only playing with her, and taking herself off immediately afterwards for two or three days, during which she declined to see him, and eluded all his efforts at an interview—"Playing with you! O Fanny! how can

you wrong my affection so cruelly? I declare to you that I would rather have you for a wife than any girl living! For Heaven's sake, Fanny, have pity on me! Say you will love me, and I will sacrifice my whole life to you. What is life worth to me without you? You say I don't want you for a wife. My beautiful love, how could you utter those words so coldly, and go away without giving me time to deny them? Only say you *will* be my wife and my own, and I will be what I am now—yours unalterably and forever—

"DICK BELLEW."

An uncommonly foolish letter to be written by a young man *not* in earnest; but, as you may perceive, poor Dick was too far gone by now to remember whether he was in earnest or no; and he not only sealed and sent it, but having on their subsequent interview been informed of Fanny's semi-engagement to the other gentleman, whom she introduced under the title of a "young wool-merchant," he flew into a regular lover's passion of jealousy, repeated all his offers more fervently than before, insisted on his rival's immediate dismissal, reiterated the whole scene in a passionate letter written that same evening; and, on Fanny's promising to obey him, and assuring him that she had no sentiment warmer than indifference for Mr. Higginson, presented her with a very pretty emerald ring (bought with his mother's money), and put it on Miss Greypole's finger in true lover's fashion, and in company with a shower of kisses. Then Fanny was satisfied, and became so sweet and amiable as to wind herself more closely into Dick's heart than before, though always keeping him on the tenterhooks by rigidly adhering to that "respectability" which Clive had somehow recognized in her first appearance.

Also she did what neither Clive nor Dick would have suspected: she went straight to Miss Beaumont, and told her in strictest confidence, and with childlike joy and bashfulness, that she was engaged to Mr. Bellew, Lady Caroline's guest. Miss Beaumont, in strictest confidence, and without any joy at all, told her mother; and Lady Caroline, very quietly, and without giving Dick an inkling of the real cause, contrived to bring that young gentleman's visit to a speedy end.

Before doing this, however, she, with a

due regard to the hearts of her other male guests, told Miss Greypole that her daughter would be going abroad very shortly, and could therefore dispense with her services as companion; and that young lady, in writing to her lover, told him as much in very plain and rather pathetic language. Dick did not feel the pathos. It was not easy for him, poor fellow, to feel very much for even his best beloved when she was away from him. However, he wrote an affectionate letter; and Fanny, who had grown very fond of the scapegrace, after all, took it for more than it meant, and was content.

They did not meet again for six months. Dick's letters had dropped off in ardor, and grown few by degrees and beautifully less. He had been through two or three flirtations or similar *delassements*, and was indeed in a fair way to forget the Greypole episode as though it had never been. Its heroine, however, was not so minded. Dick might mean to ignore the past, but Fanny determined to recall it. She said no word of complaint, even to her fickle lover; but, after waiting patiently for a given time, wrote to an uncle at Oxford, a farmer with three handsome sons, that she was wanting change of air, and would come down, if he were willing, to try it at the farm.

Three days later, Dick, lounging up the "High" for his afternoon stroll, met the enchantress looking prettier than ever, bewitchingly attired, and accompanied by the handsomest of the three cousins. Needless to say the effect. Fanny had managed, by tact as much as beauty, to pierce young Bellew's heart beneath the skin; and the wound had only partially healed. It broke out afresh at the unexpected rencontre with the young woman who had inflicted it, was aggravated by a judiciously blended show of cheerfulness and indifference on her part, and festered by jealousy of the cousin, until Master Dick found himself more hopelessly in love than ever, and renewing all his vows, protestations and promises, till, just when he was gliding to the very verge of a private marriage, the handsome cousin, suspecting that he was only being made a tool of in the matter, proposed for himself—was refused—and Fanny had to leave the farm.

Of course, as soon as she and her witcheries were gone, Dick repented himself of his folly; and tried to drown the remem-

brance of it as speedily as possible, and in such a manner as to procure his rustication, and cover his mother with affliction. The former event, however, brought with it this consoling reflection—"She'll be sure to forget all about me before the year is over, especially as she don't know where I am." Unfortunately, Fanny knew his home address as well as the college one; and as Dick never wrote a letter without betraying something which he meant to hide, she managed to gather a pretty good idea of his doings and movements, until the sudden flight to Combe Regis baffled her just as she and her mother had determined to come up to London and insist on a fulfilment of the "engagement" which, since their last meeting, Dick had seemed entirely to ignore.

Such was the story of young Bellew's connection with Miss Greypole, not as told by Dick, but as deduced by Clive from the rival accounts of man and maid, sifted and weighed according to the experience of a legal mind. When it was finished, he said, dryly:

"Well, Dick, as far as I can see, you have made a consummate fool of yourself, and will have to pay for it."

"Why, you don't mean to say she'll bring an action about it, do you?" asked Dick, miserably.

"That is just what I do mean to say, unless you settle it with her beforehand."

"What! Sue me for breach of—O hang it all, old fellow! why, it would ruin me, bag and baggage. You're out there. Fanny's a deal too fond of me for that."

"Fanny is fond of you in a certain way; but she is fonder of herself, her good name and well-being. She will not allow any of those to be damaged by maudlin sentimentality on her part, I assure you; and even if *she* were weak, her mother would be strong for her."

Dick again apostrophized Mrs. Greypole with the choicest hyperboles of endearment.

"I might just as well hang myself," he observed, dolefully.

"As marry Miss Greypole?"

"Gracious! No, that's out of the question, of course. If she were only a lady, I'd marry her to-morrow; that is, if I'd any tin to keep her on; but as it is—"

"Marriage is, as you say, out of the question. Then, Dick, let me advise you, as a friend, to tell Miss Greypole so plainly and

honestly; show her that for your mother's and sister's sake you have not a right to damage your social position, even if you would wish to do so. Speak to her frankly. Tell her you've behaved like a fool and a blackguard" ("Thank you," grumbled Dick) "and appeal to her generosity. If that doesn't answer, offer the mother what compensation you can; but for Heaven's sake keep it out of the police courts. That would be worse for your family than any misalliance."

"Hang my family?" said Dick, peevishly. "It is *I* who am to be considered first, I think; but no one ever gives a thought to that. 'Hullo! it's getting on for two; I must be off. One word, though, Clive: I'll bet you three to one that, before I've said half the things you've been suggesting, I shall be on my knees begging Fanny to be mine at any price. There's something about that girl perfectly irresistible.'"

"Then give me your word not to see her again, except in the presence of myself or some cooler head than your own. Write to her; or, if you must see her, let it be with a friend who can help you. Come, Dick, your promise on that."

"All right," said Dick; "I don't *want* to

find myself spliced, I can assure you. Good-night, old fellow; you shall write the letter for me."

And then Mr. Bellew took himself away, without another word having been said on the subject of Dallas M'Kenzie.

Left alone, Clive gave his mind to the latter, and thought about him long and steadily. The more indignant he felt with Mr. M'Kenzie for having inserted himself into an intimacy with the Bellews with any slur hanging over him, the more he felt that it was for any one rather than himself to betray him.

"I will wait," was his concluding thought. "wait and see for myself whether my suspicions are correct; and if I see anything to confirm them, I will go straight to M'Kenzie himself, tell him what I have heard against him, and give him the choice of disproving it, of breaking with the Bellews, or of no longer allowing them to remain in ignorance of his character. He is a gentleman and a man of honor in most matters; and even if we have a row about it, I believe he will behave fairly and aboveboard, if treated in a like manner. I hate underhand work."

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

## A PRETTY YOUNG LADY.

### A TALE OF HOME LIFE.

BY THEO. GIFT.

#### CHAPTER XXIII.

##### THE QUARREL BY THE SHORE.

FOR the first time in her life, Kate was suffering from an attack of real girlish embarrassment, at the idea of meeting a gentleman—two gentlemen, in fact; and during the process of putting on her bonnet for church, she wished very heartily that she could send the children without her, and copy Dick's example by staying at home.

"But if I were to let those dreadful children go without me," thought Kate, with a prophetic shiver, "Heaven only knows what worse things they would say to them. How I do wish boys were not so silly, and men so disagreeable, putting such nonsense into one's head! I only hope they will both have overslept themselves, like Dick."

And then the first chimes of the bell began, and Kate had to hurry down stairs, and see George's fingers into his gloves, and help Madge in a frantic search for her prayer-book before they started.

I don't know whether it was the rapid walk up hill, or the confusion of seeing her last hope unverified, but certainly Kate's cheeks were glowing, and she had never looked lovelier in her life than when she came into view of the two gentlemen waiting in the churchyard for her arrival. Clive was nearest; but he was apparently engaged in contemplating the view from the hill, while M'Kenzie, who stood on the church steps, was palpably and unaffectedly looking out for nothing but the party from the cottage; and as Kate's eyes, passing Clive, met his, and saw the brightening recognition in them, over all her face, and even over the little shell-like ears and round throat, there stole a tender exquisite blush, vivid and delicate as that in the heart of a moss rosebud—the virginal banner of submission, and as such read only too accurately by the man of whose nearer presence she was yet unconscious. In that fleeting blush, that almost imperceptible droop of the proud little head and saucy eyes, Clive learned that his last night's sus-

picious were correct. Kate's heart had yielded to a master's touch, and that master was Dallas M'Kenzie. More—in the way in which her gaze, while going to his rival as a bird to its nest, passed *him* without even a flicker of recognition, he learned her entire indifference to himself, and the hitherto unguessed-at strength of his own passion for her. It was only a moment, and yet long enough to teach a man three lessons bitter enough to rankle through a lifetime—lessons which, if they had only been remembered and acted on, might have saved him many an hour of after-pain, without increasing the poignancy of this.

Clive was a proud man, and no sign of what was passing in his soul showed in the hard stern lines of his face, as, disdaining to press his prior claim of friendship where it was not recognized, he moved aside at once to give M'Kenzie precedence, and would indeed have merely greeted his friends with a bow before passing on into the church; but Kate had seen him by now, and remembering her good resolutions, she took her hand from M'Kenzie, stretching it out to the young barrister with a smile more cruel in its sweetness than her previous ignoring.

"Aren't you ashamed of yourself?" she said, looking up in his face with laughing eyes, which swept the bitterness from his heart like breath from a glass; "keeping my brother out till two o'clock this morning, and preventing his getting up for church, as a good Christian should! We don't allow of such hours in Combe Regis, Mr. Clive, and I am very angry. I wonder you are up yourself this morning."

"But, you see, I am so fond of the country, I don't like to waste more minutes of it in sleep than is positively necessary; and I think it was Dick who made me late, not I him," said Clive, smiling involuntarily, poor fellow! under his queen's brightness.

She shook her head rebukingly.

"You should never throw blame on the absent ones, Mr. Clive. We must hear Dick's account before I decide who was in

fault. Hark! the bell has stopped: we must go in." And then, having kept Clive at her side till they were at the door, she allowed him to follow her into the pew, and take his seat at her side, without betraying, by word or sign, how far rather she would have seen M'Kenzie in his place. Clive was pleased and surprised, M'Kenzie cheerful and indifferent. He had not seen the blush which roused such a tempest in the barrister's soul, but Kate was only too conscious of it, and while hating herself for the weakness, became childishly timid lest M'Kenzie should be aware of it as well. She was quite grateful for the excuse to turn away to Clive, and by devoting herself exclusively to him, distract attention from her *gauche* confusion of a moment back.

Poor Clive! After all, he had not so much cause for gratitude as he imagined.

They all walked back to the cottage to dinner as soon as service was over; but Kate had forgotten her blush by now, and M'Kenzie was at her right hand, chatting in the familiar way of an old friend about "our" walk the day before yesterday, "our" boating adventure, and the place where "we" left off in "Ingoldsby." There was nothing in all that he said put together which might not have been cried at the Town Cross with impunity, but it all implied the pleasant confidence of intimacy; and Clive, who had no share in the "us" and "our," felt shut out and put on one side. The sore jealous feeling rose again in his breast, mingled with a sense of indignation against his rival; but when he looked at Kate's face, so radiant with innocent happiness, at the expression in her eyes when they rested on M'Kenzie, so soft and liquid, with a trustful love as yet unknown even to herself, that indignation became deepened and strengthened into a purely unselfish passion—sorrow for her, that such love and trust should ever be wasted, and anger against the man who could wrong it by even a shadow of deception. "And to win her love by the pretence of being one thing, while in reality he is another, is such cowardly deception," thought Clive. "No one but a blackguard would trade on a girl's innocence, and her brother's thoughtlessness. Pray heaven he be not teaching her deception too! Surely, if Lady Margaret knew of his intimacy here she would have made some allusion to it—would have wished to know something

more of the man with whom her daughter was thrown, and have taken some precautions against the imperilling of her peace of mind. She can never know, or she would have taken better care of her daughter."

Clive's own passion had faded out of his mind amid these thoughts. His whole heart was filled with Kate, her happiness, and her innocence, to the exclusion of himself, and his own wishes. He was fretting and fuming within himself because no one took proper care of her; or considered her interests with sufficient zeal; but just then Kate turned round and smiled upon him, rebuking him with playful imperiousness for being "so silent," and once again the lover resumed his place, and with clenched fist and set jaw Clive muttered to himself:

"She shall not be given up to him so easily. If she hated me, she could never speak to me in such a tone, and if no one else will take care of her, I will. I should be a coward indeed if, loving her as I do, I were to shrink from being that guide and protector because she has given me so little encouragement to declare my love."

It was the resolve of a moment; but as it passed it gave his face its harshest expression, and his voice, as he answered Kate, sounded so gruff and short, that she involuntarily repented her of having tried to be sweet to such a disagreeable man; and even M'Kenzie lifted his dark eyes and looked at him, half-inquiringly.

"You are abstracted, Mr. Clive," he said aloud, and more with the object of softening the edge of Clive's ill-tempered manner to Kate than of roughing it against himself. "Do legal complications even follow you down to such a quiet little nest as this? Why don't you copy my example, and fold away your cares with your London coat, not to be opened till your return?"

"Do you find it so easy to leave your cares behind you?" said Clive, turning to him, a peculiar light in his eyes—a peculiar inflection in his voice. "I should have thought there were some cares no man could fold away with his coats—cares which *would* follow him wherever he went, whether he willed to leave them unopened or no."

Either the tone or the words touched some chord which brought a shade over M'Kenzie's handsome face. His eyes met Clive's with an angry question in them, and he answered, sharply:

"Every man has some such troubles, I

suppose; but so long as they are not to be remedied, I consider that he is right and bound to bury them out of even his own sight as far as possible, instead of raking them up to sadden other people."

"The dead rise sometimes without being raked up," retorted Clive, "and ghosts are occasionally unpleasant visitors—the ghosts of buried sins especially."

M'Kenzie's eyes flashed out suddenly till their black depths glowed like two furnaces; and the blood rushed into his face, swelling the veins on his brow like purple cords, and making his whole figure dilate in a manner which made Kate shrink from him in involuntary alarm.

"What do you mean?" he asked, voice and lips quivering with rising passion.

"My dear Mr. M'Kenzie, don't excite yourself, or you will frighten our young hostess," said Clive, coolly. "We ought never to lose the command of our temper in polite society. You alluded to the legal complications weighing on my mind—did you not? I was referring to certain of those very complications which had come within my experience. Surely you couldn't have taken my words as applying to yourself?"

The words were more soothing than the tone, which savored of the sarcastic. M'Kenzie, however, had time to recollect himself, and repent of his late violence. By a stupendous effort, terrible even to see in one whose passions were naturally so strong—an effort which drove away every vestige of color from his face, so lately suffused with rage—he mastered his emotion as suddenly as it had mastered him. There was even a smile visible under his heavy mustache, as turning to Clive, he said, all trace of anger gone from his voice:

"Miss Bellew knows what an excitable backwoodsman I am; but indeed, Mr. Clive, you speak so ambiguously at times, that, setting apart my long absence from English society, I may be excused for not always being sure of what you do mean. I don't expect I am any different from other men in having many a buried fault to regret; yet I could hardly (as you say) suppose you to be alluding to them."

He spoke so frankly, and in such a tone of good-humored dignity, that for a moment Clive felt rebuked, and staggered in his suspicions. Only for a moment, however. The next, his common sense asserted itself, and told him that that blaze of passion had

never been evoked if his words had not hit home to some secret sore.

The day, which ought to have been so pleasant among a party of young people thrown together in this impromptu picnic-like fashion, but which was in reality full of constraint and awkwardness, and an odd feeling of thunder in the air, ready to burst at any moment, came to an end at last. Kate had intended to divide her attentions impartially; but Dick monopolized Clive; and as the latter made no effort to break away, but rather seemed to avoid her than otherwise, she was, as it were, thrown upon M'Kenzie; and indeed, after the first, felt rather glad that fate had so willed it; for, whether from some reminder contained in Clive's words, or other causes unknown, he had fallen into one of those depressed moods which made Kate's heart yearn to him, with that wistful tenderness which seems part of the maternal instinct inherent in every woman from the time of her first doll. Once he said, in answer to some remark of hers:

"I am not sure that I shall stay in England. Sometimes I think of returning to America for good."

And then Kate's cheeks grew suddenly pale, and her great eyes round with involuntary dismay.

"You don't mean it? O, surely you would not go away from all your friends again!" she said, in a quick anxious voice, which betrayed quite unconsciously to herself what such a going away would be to her; but which Clive heard, and against his own will understood at more than its right meaning.

"Why not?" said M'Kenzie, smiling half sadly. "I have not so many friends as you think, Miss Bellew—none, at any rate, to whom my going or staying would make any difference."

"That is what *you* think," said Kate, warmly, "and perhaps you don't count us; but, Mr. M'Kenzie, we should care—all of us. Do not think of going. England is much pleasanter than America, and, besides, it is your home. I thought you were quite happy here. Why should you want to go travelling away again?"

"Lucky fellow you are, M'Kenzie!" Dick said, lazily—"able to go off to Australia or Canada at an hour's notice, and with not as much bother as I have to go through if I want to come up to London from Oxford."

That's the good of having no family ties and that sort of thing."

Clive was leaning back in an American chair, playing at cat's-cradle with Dottie, who, perched on his knee, with her little pink plump legs dangling far from the ground, was laughing up in his face, as her fat fingers blundered through the mesh held in those long and strong ones for her delectation. His blue eyes flashed out in a keen glance over her head, as he spoke in answer to Dick's remark.

"Perhaps, Dick, Mr. M'Kenzie's family ties are in Canada, in which case neither we nor Miss Bellew could wonder at his being anxious to return to them. A man must always feel in rather a false position when living apart from all his natural belongings. Don't you agree with me, Mr. M'Kenzie?"

He raised his voice a little at the last words, fixing his eyes in an unspoken challenge on M'Kenzie's face; and the latter met them fully and defiantly. It was the first clash of steel in a duel to the death; but he who had delivered that preliminary feint was cool and collected, while there was an angry flush on his antagonist's brow—an agitated break in his voice, as he guarded.

"My natural belongings are confined to a few Scottish relations, who care as little for me as I for them. Family ties of my own I have none—here or in Canada."

A pause. Dottie found the cradle slipping with miraculous gentleness on to her fingers, and was lifted lightly to the floor, with a kiss of congratulation on her skill.

"Dick," said Clive, rising to his feet, one hand still on the little golden head, "will you write that letter you want me to take back with me to-morrow? I may start early, so I should like to have it as early as may be. Suppose you do it now while I'm having a smoke on the beach. Miss Bellew very rightly disapproves of late hours; and you're such a lazy fellow, you won't stir while you've an excuse for idleness in my company."

He spoke to Dick, but he looked at M'Kenzie still. "I will go with you," said the latter, in answer to that look; and Clive nodded. After all, that had only been the preliminary sharpening of the weapons. The real duel was to come; a duel with no seconds and no witnesses: a duel not for life or death; but for sweeter than life and sharper than death—for honor or dishonor.

And even innocent light-hearted Katie felt a cold shiver of some impending evil creep over her warm young limbs, and dim the roses in her fresh fair cheeks, as she listened, anxious but uncomprehending. Yet there was a smile on each man's face as he turned to her before going out.

"What time do you have tea, Miss Bellew?" said M'Kenzie. "Eight? Thanks. We won't keep it waiting; but I'm sure you will be glad to get rid of us for a few minutes, after devoting yourself to us so kindly through the whole day."

"Wherefore we won't inflict ourselves on you a moment before eight," added Clive. "Dick, you lazy beggar, you'll want all that time to get your letter written, and I shan't show till it is."

"That's nonsense," retorted Dick. "It will take ten minutes, at most; and if you are not in by then, I'll come out and join you. I say, Kitten, where the dickens is the ink?"

\* \* \* \* \*

"Fortunately, ten minutes will be more than sufficient for what I have to say," said M'Kenzie, as, after descending to the beach in silence, they turned an angle of the cliff which shut them out of hearing of even any "little pitchers" who might be in the gardens above. "I've no doubt that you can guess what it is, Mr. Clive."

"I am waiting to hear," said Clive. "But if you mean I guess you have something to say, you are more than right. I hope as well as guess it."

His tone was aggressive, almost insolent; and M'Kenzie's hands, clasped behind his back, tingled and clenched each other as in a vice before he replied:

"Your manner to me to-day has been unpleasant enough to warrant such a hope. It may be attributable to a young man's jealousy, and however causeless such a feeling in the present case, I could excuse it were it only confined to a short and ungracious manner—"

"In other words, you would carefully avoid taking hold of it as long as I gave you nothing to take hold of," said Clive, slowly and calmly. "You are magnanimous, Mr. M'Kenzie. I'll relieve your mind of one scruple, however; I am not actuated by any feelings of jealousy whatsoever. To say I was not aware I had cause for them, would be rude when you so plainly imply the reverse; so—I don't say it."



"M'Kenzie's eyes flashed. "I believe you wish to insult me," he said, hotly. "You have thrown out more than one hint and insinuation to-day reflecting either on my honor or general character. Stay, sir! let me speak. I don't believe that our friends have understood your innuendoes, but—"

"I agree with you," said Clive. "Wanting the clue which *you* possess, they have not even perceived the innuendoes which you understood, and complain of."

"Complain! You mistake, sir. I do more than complain; I demand an explanation on your part for the past, and an apology for your present language. Excuses are, I see, wasted on you."

"Entirely," said Clive, "seeing that I am here to force the explanation; only it is to come from you as well as me. Excuses! Why, confound it! I think you ought to be grateful to me for having led you to speak to me yourself, instead of saying what I had to say to your friends yonder. Do you think that if I pleased I couldn't have made them understand the drift of my discourse as well or better than yourself? Dick Bellevue is one of my nearest friends. He trusts his most private affairs to me as to an elder brother. What was to hinder me from speaking to him about withdrawing his sisters from your society, and giving him my full reasons for such a caution? Of my own free will I have spoken to you instead; and that you understood me at all is the best proof of the justice of my suspicions. You say I have been uncivil to you; I don't deny it. You want an explanation? Take it."

"Four years ago, before I entered at the Bar, I had occasion to go to Canada. I arrived at S. Louis-sur-Eaux, a little town on the borders, just as a wedding party was leaving the church—Mr. M'Kenzie, you grow pale; do I interest you?—I did not see the bride's face; it was looking from me and hidden in her veil; but that of the bridegroom was turned full on me, and though I've no doubt he never noticed my presence, I could have sworn to him anywhere in aftertimes—I could swear to him now. *You, sir, and no other man!* Two years later I again crossed the Atlantic, on my first legal business. At the bar of a New York hotel I heard a certain Mr. Dallas M'Kenzie spoken of as an eccentric bachelor, a woman-hater and misanthrope. He was discussed openly among a dozen men, and as openly the reason of his avoid-

ance of women was given in half a dozen words—some affair with a lady! Female society had cut Mr. M'Kenzie; Mr. M'Kenzie had revenged himself by cutting it. Stop! Excuse me; you asked for an explanation, I have only given you part of one as yet. I met the gentleman in question at a men's dinner-party. We travelled together for two days by rail; I found him a pleasant companion, a polished gentleman; in fact I liked him; but I noticed he spoke of himself as a bachelor. If marriage were discussed he joined in the question simply as an outsider, and to inveigh against it; and I, remembering the new-made wife I had seen on his arm that day at S. Louis-sur-Eaux, wondered within myself. Accident solved my wonderment. In a lawyer's office I happened to mention my late travelling companion by name. My friend nodded.

"M'Kenzie! H'm—ha—yes, I've met him; very pleasant fellow, superior and—but a man with daughters and all that, you know, must be careful. You've heard—"

"I said I had."

"Ah! that's not all there is to hear; I suppose no one ever told you he is married?"

"I said I was aware of it."

"In Canada; quarrelled with his wife, and separated from her since, I believe. It was hushed up, fortunately for him; but a man with daughters, you know—one must be careful."

"I agreed with him. Two years later I again met the gentleman in question, this time in England and at a ball at General de Ponsonby's. I meet him often now; I hear him spoken of as a bachelor, eligible and estimable in all respects; I find him domesticated on terms of the greatest intimacy with the sons and daughters of a lady who honors me with her friendship and confidence; I see him winning the regard of a young girl as innocent as she is inexperienced; I see him trading upon her guileless trust, flaunting his false plumes, and acting—"

"A LIE! Do you hear me? A foul, cowardly, slanderous lie from beginning to end!"

M'Kenzie got no further. By a perfectly frightful effort at self-control, belied by his white churning lips and quivering hands, he had forced himself to listen for a given time. Before Clive had finished that control broke down; and like a tiger he turned

upon his accuser with clenched fist as in act to strike, and pale infuriate lips, hurling the fierce invective of denial at the latter's head.

That denial was never finished.

The tide had risen, so that they had left the beach, and were pursuing a narrow path hewn partly by nature, partly by the hand of man, out of the face of the cliff. Below them, at the distance of two or three feet, rippled the purple waters of the Channel, stretching away in long waving lines of ever-deepening violet to the horizon. The sun had set, and the two men and the water were in shadow; but over the horizon floated one long cloud like a streak of blood, and all the eastern sky was suffused with a faint rosy light; while far above their heads the towering cliffs were stained with a crimson glory on their summits—the last reflection of the descended orb of day. There was just room on this path for two men to walk abreast with comfort. Higher up it narrowed, and became a mere thread where one could hardly find space to set his foot, but here was room for both; and M'Kenzie had the inside and was slightly in advance. In that burst of fury he turned with a kind of spring on Clive. The latter started aside, involuntarily lifting his arm to avoid the threatened collision; and without word or touch, by the sheer impetus of his own unthinking passion, M'Kenzie stumbled, and went headlong into the rising waters below!

One sharp agonized cry, and then—a dead silence; but far, far overhead a gull flew past with a long wailing note, as if to carry the echo of that cry to heaven; and into the holes and caverns of the cliffs the waves rushed with a solemn thunderous roll, as though the sea were firing a funeral salute over the ex-officer's grave.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### "WHAT HAVE YOU DONE WITH HIM?"

LONG ago I heard a woman say to her son, in a fit of irritation, "If you will persist in going out of doors bareheaded in a tropical country, you will get a sunstroke; and really, I shall not be sorry, for I am sick of warning you."

That same day her son was brought home to her, struck down like a log under the burning noonday sun. Before another

morning he was dead; and I, going into the darkened room, found a miserable maddened woman, crouching beside the corpse, with tearless eyes and parched chalky lips, which murmured over and over again in ceaseless refrain:

"I told him I would not be sorry—not sorry—not sorry. Yes, I told him so—that I—would—not—be—sorry."

They brought her home afterwards—to a lunatic asylum in her native country. I believe she is living still, a harmless maniac, ever reciting the same monotonous litany of despair.

While Clive had been telling his story to M'Kenzie, his acute eye had noted accurately the signs of fury rising and fermenting in the latter's breast. Once, when the Canadian attempted to interrupt him, the thought did cross his mind, "If I wish we were on terra firma, for this passionate fellow is quite capable of pitching himself or me over the edge if he is worked up;" and again—"Prevised is prevented for me. Let him take a cold bath if he will; it will cool his passion—I shan't prevent him."

Now, five minutes later, the thought had come to pass, and M'Kenzie had gone face foremost into the purple curling waves, his passion cooled in one stupendous splash.

The water was not five feet deep at this part, and to a swimmer would but have been the "cold bath" Clive had called it. That M'Kenzie could swim, and swim well, he happened to know; and after the first start and gasp of surprise he came to the edge of the path, bending over and stretching out his hands, in the full expectation of seeing M'Kenzie rise dripping from his "douche," and of hauling him, discomfited and humiliated, on to dry land again. He was disappointed.

Up, almost to touch his finger-tips, leapt the waves, breaking in little showers of foam and spray against the cliff. He could see the brown tangled seaweed floating like a mermaid's web beneath their glittering surface; here and there an out-jutting rock standing up like the fangs of some deceased sea-monster; a dead bird gliding swiftly past, the bloody hole still visible on its upturned breast, ere it was whirled out to sea by the powerful current sweeping round those rocky shores; but no M'Kenzie! If the gnomes of the sea had dragged him down and pinioned him within their twilight palaces beneath, there could not have

been less sign of him or his existence.

"Merciful heavens!" cried Clive; "the man must have stunned himself against the bottom." And only waiting to jerk off his coat and boots, without thinking of danger to himself, or of his late animosity to the missing man—without thought of anything, in fact, except that there was something to be done, and he must do it, he swung himself over the edge of the path into the waters which had gulfed and hidden the Canadian. As he did so, his foot struck against a naked hand firmly clenched over a sunken rock, dislodged it from its hold, and in the same moment a dark heavy body, with outstretched limbs and black dripping hair, rose heavily to the surface, amid a perfect whirlpool of bubbles and marine debris. The shock almost knocked Clive off his feet. Had it quite done so, the sea-gulls might have sung a requiem over both of them; for, as to swimming, the clever lawyer could do about as much of that as most inland-reared young fellows, or—twelve-inch foot! By a desperate effort he recovered himself, and in the same moment made a clutch. M'Kenzie, who, opening his great black eyes with a glare of returning consciousness as the cold breeze smote upon his face, caught at the outstretched hand, and fastened on it with a grip which threatened to drag him down to the bottom.

"Hold hard, if you please," said Clive. He spoke quite cool, though it was only by an almost superhuman effort of muscular strength that he could keep his footing against the current alone, and this frenzied clutch threatened to shake him off it altogether. "You're all right. Put your feet down instead of your head, that's all."

"Save me!" cried M'Kenzie, faintly. His head was bleeding from a cut above the temple, and his grasp loosened from weakness and bewilderment.

Clive took advantage of it to wrest his arm free, and in the same instant caught a firm hold of his antagonist's collar, while with the other hand he braced himself against a protruding fang of rock. To move thus impeded, and with the water up to his breast, was impossible. It required all his strength to hold M'Kenzie's head above the waves, until the latter was sufficiently recovered from his second attack of faintness to recognize where he was, and be able to assist himself. When that was achieved, the rest was easy. With one

stroke of his arm, the Canadian was under the lee of the cliff not three yards distant, and in another minute had scrambled—half drowned, with the blood oozing from his forehead and mingling with the seawater on his face in purple streaks, but otherwise uninjured—on to the path whence his passion had hurled him down. Clive tried to follow, but that last powerful strain had done for his strong right wrist for the present. His first effort to grasp the cliff to which he had floundered wrung from him an involuntary cry of pain; and yet it did not hurt him half as much as the necessity of letting his rival help him up. That turned his lips white, and made him wince as no physical torture could have ever done.

M'Kenzie, however, guessed nothing of the feeling. Equally impulsive in his gratitude as in his anger, he would, had he been a Frenchman, have flung himself into Clive's arms, and hugged him in a transport of emotion. Being an Anglo-Saxon, he spared Clive that demonstration, and, instead, inflicted on his left hand (the only available one) a grip to which his drowning clutch had been but child's play.

"You have saved my life," he said, hoarsely. "How can I ever thank you enough?"

"Pray don't try," said Clive, looking away from the earnest eyes, and releasing his hand as quickly as he could. "You've no cause for thanks, I assure you."

"Not when you jumped in and hauled me out when I was disabled from helping myself? Why, my dear fellow, I might have been drowned but for you. I suppose I hit my head against one of those confounded rocks, for—ah! if you hadn't helped me, where should I have been now?"

"At the bottom," interrupted Clive, almost rudely. "Excuse me if I don't join in your rejoicings. As I happened to be on the spot, I was compelled to remember that there is such a thing as being accessory to another man's death, without actually assisting him to it. Believe me"—and he spoke with a savage earnestness which disdained pretence—"if I could have chosen, fate would have planted me twenty miles off, and saved Kate Bellew from the intrigues of a—"

"Blackguard!" suggested M'Kenzie, as Clive broke off with a shrug of his broad shoulders, and began pulling on his coat.

The Canadian did not speak angrily. A furrow of pain and natural mortification had come upon his brow at this second repulse, more churlish than the last; but wrath was not to be aroused a second time that evening. Do you not think that angry tongue of the second Henry was slow and careful for many a day after the blood shed before the high altar of the cathedral at Canterbury had ceased to redden the marble steps, and the corpse of the murdered archbishop had been carried away out of sight of friend and enemy alike? M'Kenzie went up to the barrister, and laid his hand on his shoulder.

"You think me that, and worse?" he said. "Has your legal experience never taught you that before deciding on a case you should hear both sides of it? Look here, Clive"—and though he smiled there was an echo of past pain and sorrow in his voice, which touched his rival in spite of himself—"you have given me the outlines of a story which any man might resent to hear told in connection with himself. Do you *want* to hear the true one? Twenty minutes ago my pride was up, and I would not have told it you, first because neither you nor any other man has a shadow of right to ask it from me; and next because, if you had had the right, I would not have owned it when claimed in such a tone; but since then you've risked your life to save another's, and that other's a man you disliked and despised. Confound it, Clive! Can't you see that, however you repudiate his gratitude, he must feel that you've done a better thing than if he were a friend of yours? I never thought to speak of that which has darkened my whole life to any living being, man or woman. Don't you know yourself that you'd rather cut your heart out than tell some things to your nearest and dearest friend? You are no friend of mine; but I'm going to tell you now; and when we get to the hotel I'll show you full proof of the truth of my words. Only"—and here the pain in his voice deepened till it grew so hoarse as to be hardly intelligible—"when I've told you my story, don't say anything. You can't do me justice without speaking of—of other people. Don't do it."

Clive was sitting on a hummock of sandy earth, pulling on his boots over his wet feet. He looked up keenly and quickly into the dark southern face, which even through

seawater, blood-stains and agitation showed so handsome and earnest; and as he did so an uncomfortable sense of being in the wrong, of having allowed prejudice to make him insolent and unjust, began to dawn upon his unwilling mind. Indeed I think it was this very reluctance to accept the suggestion, which showed him that in truth he would have preferred to find M'Kenzie the scoundrel he believed him, that though he asked for an explanation, it was the last thing he desired; for when he spoke it was sharply and hurriedly, as if to get the better of his smaller self before it got the better of him.

A great man once said, "It is only a coward who can boast he has never been afraid." An honorable man is generally more conscious of his deceitfulness than a knave.

"Keep your story to yourself," he said, almost roughly. "I have no right to hear it, as you say; and I don't want to hear it, if I had."

M'Kenzie smiled a little bitterly.

"That is all very well," he said, "but, my dear fellow, excuse me after what you've said, the matter can only rest here—with honor."

"I know that," said Clive, shortly, as he rose to his feet, "and that's why I ask you to give me your word as a gentleman that there is no truth whatever in these imputations against your honor. Can you do it?"

"Yes! Truth in—!" They are the foulest lies."

"Then—excuse my pressing you, I only want Yes or No—there is nothing, on your word and honor, against you which need prevent your going up in all honesty to any lady (we won't mention names), and asking her for her daughter's hand?"

"On my word of honor, nothing."

Clive turned round. There was a pale set look in his face.

"That will do," he said. "I am satisfied" (but he didn't look it), "and apologize; though—"

"Go on," said M'Kenzie, quietly. "You are not satisfied, and I can see it. Go on."

"Well, if I'm not," Clive answered, bluntly, "it's just this; I meet you here as a bachelor disclaiming all connection with family ties; and yet when I first saw you it was most certainly with—"

"My wife!" said M'Kenzie. He spoke firmly; but that it was difficult for him to speak at all was evident. "Mr. Clive,

when a man has lost something which was more precious to him than his own life, he is not fond of talking of it. You are right. I had a wife—once. I have nothing now but a memory—she is dead."

Clive turned to him abruptly, and held out his hand, the best part of his nature touched to kindness and generosity.

"Forgive me," he said, his voice softening for the first time—"and thank you. I won't ask any more. I'd no right to ask that, but—Ah, well! I've been in the wrong all through; and all I can do is to repair it. There's this comfort for you," and he tried to speak cordially and gladly, "she—they, I mean—never shared my suspicions down there; and if I've done you harm with Dick by any hint or warning, I'll undo it before to-night is over."

M'Kenzie saw through his late opponent at that moment, and felt half amused and half sorry for the young fellow who was trying to make the *amende honorable* to him. They had turned homewards, and were walking swiftly under the shadow of the cliff, so as to keep warm in their drenched garments. The red stain had faded out of the sky, and out of the downs. No human being was in sight, no sound but the roll of the waves smote upon the ear. Only out at sea a long line of fishing-boats dotted the horizon; and twilight, gray and shadowy, hung over all, like the veil of a young widow over a face from which the sunshine of happiness has been banished for a time. M'Kenzie laid his hand on his companion's arm.

"I think there is no necessity for you to say anything," he said, good-naturedly. "If our friends didn't share your mistake, what need for enlightening them? And as for Miss Bellew—"

"Pray don't say anything about her," Clive interrupted, hastily. "Her name should never have been mentioned at all. Bad form on my part; and I'm awfully sorry for it; but I know her—all of them, better than you, and when I thought you were deceiving her—them—"

"You came to the rescue, like a knight of chivalry," said M'Kenzie, smiling. "Well, my dear fellow, I quite agree with you that, in general, young ladies' names are best left unmeddled with, either for attack or defence; but as it has been done on this occasion, we may as well not leave the subject unfinished. You think that I am

in love with Miss Bellew, and that I'm doing my best, not without success, to make her in love with me, eh?"

Clive bit his lip. He had wronged the Canadian, and repented of his wrong; but he never felt nearer to hating him than at that moment.

"I don't think that you are in love with her—now," he said, in his harshest voice. "If you had been, you could never have said that."

"You are quite right," M'Kenzie answered, good-humoredly. "And now that I have been so frank with you, be the same with me. If I am not in love with her, you are. Am I not right also?"

Clive bit his lip again. There was a slight inflexion of amusement in the other's voice, which stung through all his reserve like the barb of a poisoned arrow. Not to reply, however, would have been only a more humiliating form of assent; and denial never came into his head. It is strange, but with some men truth, even on the subject of love, seems more natural than a lie!

"What if you are?" he said, curtly. "I've been a fool, I own it; but at least I've not prosecuted my folly to any one's harm but my own."

"I don't think you have," said M'Kenzie. "It seems to me, though, that the folly lies, not in loving Miss Bellew (who is a very sweet lovable girl), but in not prosecuting your love. My dear fellow, I owe you a debt. Let me pay it by relieving your mind. I am not your rival, as you think. I neither wish to marry Miss Bellew, nor have I tried to win her affections. Were I still a married man" (and he sighed), "I could not be more innocent on that subject, and I haven't the least reason to suppose that she is any way less so. So far from caring for me in that way, I fancy she is as yet free from all thought of love or lovers. Indeed, to me, one of her greatest charms is that frank, childlike—I was almost saying boyish innocence. It seems a pity to disturb it at all; but if you love her, as I see you do, why may not she see it also; and why don't you tell her so?"

"Tell her!" repeated Clive in a sort of dismay. He was still bewildered at this second enlightenment. It did not seem credible (though he had been so unwilling to admit his own love even to himself) that another man should be thrown with Kate, as M'Kenzie had been, and not care for her;

a man, too, to whom she had shown such sweet favor as to the Canadian! and then he remembered the blush she had given the former that morning, with a fresh sick feeling of pain.

"Not quite such a fool, foolish as I am!" he said.

"But, my dear Clive—excuse my calling you so," said M'Kenzie, laughing—"it seems to me that you are rather foolish in this. How can you tell whether she likes you or not unless you ask her? Take the advice of a man a good deal older than yourself, and let her see a little of your feelings. Girls like to be courted. It is their prerogative to be served then, as it's their duty to serve them afterwards; and you rather seem to avoid her than otherwise."

"You've thought so, have you?" said Clive. "Then give me credit for non-interference."

"What, when I've told you there is no interference in the case! I like the little girl much—very much. She is quite charming; but as to the idea you suggest, it is all nonsense. That sort of thing has been over with me for many a year."

"Perhaps every one is not as well aware of that as you," suggested Clive. Very undemonstrative himself, he had looked on M'Kenzie's confidential, almost caressing manner with women as rather *prononce* love-making. The latter broke into a laugh half sad, half merry:

"I think most women have a sort of instinct on that subject," he said. "They know when they are loved, at any rate. We don't; that's why we have to ask them. Take my advice now, and ask her. As for me—look here—I shan't even see her again. I've no change of clothes with me, and I don't want to get a rheumatic fever from wearing these wet ones; so I shall just go to bed while they're drying, and you can take my excuses round to the cottage for me. I shall send them a line in the morning to say I am summoned up to London on important business, and that I left you to bring George up later. You won't mind looking after the little chap, will you? He'll lean his head and arms out as far as he can in every tunnel, and try to jump out ten minutes before the train stops at every station, and drum the devil's tattoo on your feet for the rest of the way; but perhaps you'll have a brother's right to keep him in order by then. Deuce take it, Clive! I'm

not at all sure the bonny little lassie doesn't like you more than you fancy, for the very reason that she's so confoundedly careful to hide it."

"I thought you considered her so childishly innocent," said Clive; but his heart would brighten in spite of himself, and the stern mouth softened into a smile. "M'Kenzie—I hope this isn't generosity on your part."

"Generosity! My dear fellow, I don't pretend to be over-virtuous; and if I were in love with Kate Bellew, neither you nor any other man should have the ghost of a chance from me till I had tried my own fate and—failed. I'm going to have a stiff glass of hot brandy and water, and go to bed. Let me recommend the former to you before going up to the cottage; and ask me to congratulate you till to-morrow. I shall be asleep before you come back."

Clive nodded.

"I won't awake you. Good-night, and thanks," he said, turning away in his short manner, and going into his own room, M'Kenzie looking after him for a moment; a slight kindly smile lurking under his mustache.

It did not take Clive long to change his clothes, even though he had but one hand to do it with. He had no past to look back on; and cool as he might be in all outward seeming, it was not the nature of a young fellow, with any blood in his veins at all, to go through an hour such as that which had just ticked out its last minutes on the old church-clock, and not feel its excitement still seething in his brain, and making every pulse in his body quiver with latent fire. The man whom he had thought a scoundrel had satisfied him that he was equally to be respected, and more to be pitied than himself; a gentleman against whom he had no right to warn any one; and who was as free to woo and win Kate Bellew as he, Bernard Clive, if he so pleased. But, on the other hand, it appeared that he did not so please, that so far from being Clive's rival he was anxious to be his friend, and to aid him in his suit. Two enemies had struggled together for life or death, and grown friends in the strife. A duel had been fought, and either party had been at once victor and vanquished. An apparently insurmountable barrier to his love had proved the veriest cobweb of imagination; and—it had all happened in an hour! Little wonder that

he bungled hurriedly over his dressing, and only waiting to bind a wet handkerchief round his now stiff and swollen wrist, set out for the cottage.

M'Kenzie had seen through the love which he had hardly admitted to himself, had implied that Kate saw through it too, and laughed at him for faint-heartedness. That accusation at least they should be mistaken in. He might be a fool, but at least he was no coward; and perhaps, after all, *Katie might care for him a little.*

It had come on to rain and blow; but he did not heed it as he strode along the steep dusky street, and finding the cottage-door hospitably open (as was the wont in Combe Regis) passed into the passage, and knocked at the parlor door within. A voice from inside—Kate's, but sounding unlike her usual tone—answered, "Come in;" and Clive tried to obey. He had forgotten, however, that his right hand was useless, and was making a second bungling attempt to turn the handle with his left, when it was suddenly wrenched round from inside, and Kate stood in the open doorway before

him. There was no one else in the room; and the candles had not yet been lighted; but as she stood there, framed in the dark doorway, and cut out as it were against a background of red firelight, with her thick curly hair tinged with red upon the crown, and faint red reflections among the shimmering folds of her white muslin, he saw that her face was deadly pale, and her glance rested on him with an expression of repulsion more intense than he had ever seen in any human face before.

"*You!*" she said in a sort of whisper, more expressive of deadly sickening than even a shriek could be—"and *alone!*" Her eyes went out into the dark passage as she spoke, as if in search of something, and then fixed themselves on Clive in almost fierce appeal.

"Where is Mr. M'Kenzie?" she asked—"Mr. Clive, what have you done with him?" and involuntarily she put out her hand and laid it with a grasp wonderfully powerful for such baby-fingers, on Clive's arm.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

## A PRETTY YOUNG LADY.

### A TALE OF HOME LIFE.

BY THEO. GIFT.

#### CHAPTER XXV.

##### AT CARR COTTAGE.

FOR a moment Clive was utterly taken aback, and simply met Miss Bellew's gaze with one of stupefied wonder. Then, as he saw her lips blanch, and felt her hand tremble on his arm, he answered, quickly:

"*Done with him!* M'Kenziel What should I have done with him? Really"—with some natural indignation—"I don't understand you, Miss Bellew."

The tone was one of utter surprise, not unmingled with rebuke. It was rather hard on him, poor fellow, to be met, on coming to try his fate with the woman he loved, not by a word of welcome for himself, but an eager question for the man he could not help looking on as his rival—unconscious, perhaps, but his rival all the same. But what on earth had agitated the girl, that she should look and speak like this? Had any one frightened her? Good heavens! how white she was!

"Are you alone? What is the matter?" he asked, forgetting his first natural offence in concern, and instinctively laying his hand over the little fingers still clenched on his lamed wrist. "Miss Bellew—Kate, do not look like that, child. Has anything happened to alarm you?"

For all reply Kate tore away her hand from under his, her eyes fixing with an awful look of dread and repulsion on the wet bandage she had touched.

"What *has* happened? Tell *me*!" she gasped, facing him, even while she shrank away with a mingled terror and ferocity which almost made Clive wonder if her mind had gone astray.

"Happened? Nothing," he said, suppressing an involuntary quiver of the lips at the physical pain caused by the rude jar on his injured hand. "Sit down, and try and be calm. Where is Dick—or your maid? Surely they have not left you alone for any infernal scoundrel to annoy you?"

Kate did not even hear him. She saw he

was approaching her, and tried to wave him back; but her limbs tottered under her. There was a dark mist before her eyes, a singing in her ears; and then—in the same moment there came a hasty tap at the door; and Mrs. Dobson entered, flushed and panting with hurry and importance.

"O, I beg parding—I beg parding, I'm sure, m'm," the good woman stammered, her quick eye detecting Clive's presence in a moment; and with a gleam of conscious intelligence, "Dear heart! You'll excuse me making so bold, m'm, I'm sure; but I just come in to tell as t'other gentleman aint murdered at all. It were just a bamfoozle o' that lumpin' idiot of a Sam Gosling; but in course this gentleman's been and telled you all about it already; and I'm sure I don't wonder you was frightened, m'm, an' hopes you'll excuse my intrudin'."

"What did frighten Miss Bellew? And what is this about a murder?" asked Clive, turning with some sharpness to the landlady for a solution of what was utterly bewildering him. Kate had sunk into an armchair, and Mrs. Dobson laughed a little nervously. She did not like the young barrister's tone.

"Well, sir, it was too 'dicolous, an' I'm sure I hopes as you wont be put out; but a silly mooncalf of a boy as lives next door here heard you an' t'other gentleman a talking under the cliffs; an'—Well, sir, you'll hardly believe it, an' I'm sure I hope you'll laugh, which is what *he* wont if his father takes my advice, an' gives him a right good leatherin' for spreading such stories to drive quality from the town—but the fool took it into his head that—ha! ha! ha!—that you'd murdered the dark gentleman (as if gentry couldn't have a few words without going to that there length!) an' miss heard tell of it first, and were took dreadfully aback, an' no wonder, sir; and now, of course, half a dozen folk either saw t'other goin' into the 'Red Lion,' or heerd him in his own room, an' all right; an' for sure you'll tell miss all about it; so



I'll go and get the tea up afore Jane comes in with the young lady an' gentleman."

Exit Mrs. Dobson, smiling and nodding to the last, but all the same convinced at the first glance that the boy had not been such a fool, after all; and that if murder had been escaped, there had been, at least, a serious quarrel between this angry-looking gentleman and the Canadian, and a quarrel roused by jealousy.

"Mr. Clive," said Kate, rising up, and speaking with a very trembling little voice, and very scarlet cheeks, as shame succeeded to bewilderment and thanksgiving, "I—I'm afraid that I—I have made a—mistake—"

She must have spoken very low, for he did not move, or seem to hear; and plucking up her courage, Kate came nearer, and made a second effort at conciliation—wonderful for her.

"I am so sorry I was so silly," she said, trying to smile, but feeling more nervous than she would have liked to acknowledge; and then Clive turned to her, and Kate flinched afresh, for his face—all but that red stain—was deadly white; and round his eyes were two dark circles of pure mental pain.

"Kate," he said, taking her hand in his, and holding it firmly while he looked into her face, "do you mean to tell me that you believed just now that—I had murdered Dallas M'Kenzie?—I?"

Kate started and stammered, and grew first red, and then white. Unreadiness of speech was most certainly not one of her defects in general; but to have her hand taken—gripped, one may say—in that manner; and to be called "Kate"—not even *Mrs* Kate, but *Kate*!—and this by Bernard Clive, of all people—it was too out-of-the-way and unparalleled a circumstance not to put the bravest young lady off her nerve for a moment. Her eyes grew round and wide, as though the scarlet blushes beneath were dilating them; and she tried vainly to free her hand as she faltered:

"I—you forget what I heard the boy say; and—and when you came in alone, it was only natural I should—"

"Natural that you should think me a murderer!" cried Clive, with an irrepressible bitterness which emphasized itself in his clasp on her hand; "I knew you had not much opinion of me, but *this*—I could hardly have believed it even from you."

His face was in deep shadow, so that Kate could not see the intensity of wistful pain written on brow and eyes. She was only irritated at his persistency in holding her hand, and at the emphasis he laid on "you," as though he could have expected a good deal of slander and uncharitableness from her, but that she had even gone beyond his expectations.

"I don't know that you have any right to say what opinion I have of you," she said, with a little childish petulance, which made her look rather prettier than before. "And—please let go my hand, Mr. Clive—you know you were out with him; and you don't like him. It may have been very silly; but when I heard what the boy said, I was so frightened that—"

"That, in your care for Mr. M'Kenzie's safety, you forgot that gentlemen are not in the habit of murdering each other in modern society," put in Clive, with a flash of indignant sarcasm. He had let go her hand the moment he was desired.

"It was not care for Mr. M'Kenzie," said Kate, drawing up her young head proudly. "He is a friend of ours, but I should have felt the same if it had been any one else. When such a thing is done, it is the dreadful wickedness and not the person that one thinks of; and, Mr. Clive, I don't think you should speak in that way to me. No other gentleman does so; and I am not used to it."

If she had only not been so fairly, fatally bewitching! If every new mood and movement had not made her more perversely fascinating than the last! And yet after that speech she went on to say harder things yet.

"Where is Mr. M'Kenzie?" asked the young lady, as Clive made no answer to her rebuke. She never guessed (how should she?) that it was fighting with his love for her which kept him silent. "If you have not quarrelled, why has he not come in with you, and why do you look so strange? When you came in you were as white as my dress, and your wrist—O Mr. Clive!" And Kate's voice grew sharp and tremulous as alarm again quickened in her pulses. "You are trying to deceive me; but—but you cannot deny that something has happened, and when Dick comes in he will be as anxious as I to know what it is."

"But not as ready as you to blame me before he knows what it is," observed

Clive. Kate flushed to the very temples.

"I am not blaming you," she said; "I asked you a question, that is all; but if you did quarrel, I will say that I think you provoked it; and when Dick—"

"There is no necessity to wait for Dick," said Clive, slowly; "so far from trying to deceive you by excusing myself, I will tell you at once that something has happened. I did provoke Mr. M'Kenzie, and also quarrelled with him. He slipped into the water, and, not having a change of dry clothes, has been obliged to remain at the inn this evening, for which he desired me to apologize to you. As to my wrist, I hurt it myself, lifting a heavy weight. Are you satisfied, Miss Bellew?"

"Satisfied!" repeated Kate, rather indignantly; "you quarrelled and he—*slipped* into the water! Mr. Clive, I am not a child. Do you mean that you pushed him in? You have said all you could to prejudice us against him; and though I supposed you believed your opinion of him to be the true one—"

"It was not a true one," interrupted Clive. "That is what I wished to tell you when I came in. I did believe certain things against Mr. M'Kenzie, I own it; but now I find I was mistaken, and retract any opinions I may have expressed."

"Then why did you express them?" asked Kate, warmly, and not without a certain irrepressible triumph in her hero's exaltation. "I may be a foolish girl, Mr. Clive, but it seems to me that to blacken another man's character without cause is even worse than quarrelling with and striking him. You sneered at me for being frightened; but when two friends go out and only one comes back, in different clothes, with his wrist bandaged, and his face—see for yourself what is on your face."

And Clive, turning to the little glass over the chimney-board, saw reflected there the red stain which had greeted Kate's eyes on his first entrance.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### OLIVE GETS HIS CONGE.

A BRIGHT fresh morning, and Kate sitting on the beach reading a letter. Above her head big fleecy white clouds driving one over another, like gigantic snowflakes across a sky of clear brilliant blue. In front, the

sea, a darker blue, capped with foam, sparkling and frothing in a very whirlpool of bubble, glitter and spray from the tips of her little toes to the boundary line of the far blue horizon. Behind, the red roofs of the village, new washed in last night's rain, glowing like honest faces in the sunshine, and giving warmth and body to the blue-green coloring of the surroundings. Linen hanging out to dry in a white flutter on the gooseberry-bushes in the cottage gardens at the back. May-trees, all a wildness of bloom, filling the air with perfume. Dottie digging holes in the sand at a little distance. Kate, her hat on the back of her head, trying to be interested in Bee Vanborough's six pages of closely-written epistle, and not feel sulky because Dick had gone to breakfast at the inn, and had stayed there instead of bringing his friends back to the cottage. George and Madgie—somewhere!—not being audible, probably in mischief.

"Good-morning, Miss Bellew."

Kate turned round, dropping her letters, and looking up with a smile of expectation. True, it was Clive's voice which spoke; but she never dreamt but that he was accompanied by the others; and though her face fell to quite disproportionate length on discovering that he was alone, he had stooped to pick up the scattered sheets of paper, and did not see the change.

"Good-morning," she said, with cool civility. "O thank you. Pray don't take the trouble" (as the wind blew away one of the pages, and he went after it). "Is Dick with you?" She was on her guard this morning, and would not be the first to mention the other's name.

"No," said Clive. "He bade me tell you he would not be in till lunch. I have another message for you—from M'Kenzie."

"How dare he speak of him after last night!" thought Kate. "A message!" she repeated, aloud. "What is it?" But her voice failed a little; for, unless he were not coming himself, what need to send a message?

"It was to bid you good-by," said Clive, quietly, his eyes reading her face as if to note the disappointment she was determined not to show. "He begged me to tell you that he was summoned up to town too early this morning to make his adieu in person, and that he hoped you would confide George to my care when I leave this evening. He

did not like to carry off the little fellow in such a hurry."

"I do not think there is any need for George to go away again," said Kate, more deeply offended than she would have cared to own even to herself. "Mrs. Dobson has managed to make him up a little bed, and—O no! I am sure my mother would prefer his being with us when there is no absolute necessity for trespassing on other people's kindness."

She spoke more haughtily than she knew; but, indeed, her poor little heart was swelling with wounded feeling, of which M'Kenzie was the cause—not Clive. What had she done, that all of a sudden he should avoid her and return to town without even bidding her good-by? It was very generous and magnanimous of him to defend and excuse his defamer; but he need not make common cause with the latter, and use his enemy as a messenger to his friend. What *had* she done? Nothing that she could think of. Had she failed in any kindness to him? Most certainly not. If she had erred at all, it was the other way, and the other man who ought to have left her in offence; or was it—but no! such a thought could never have entered his mind. Clive—no, not even Clive, hateful as he was, could ever have been so cowardly, so cruel and ungenerous as to hint to him, what he had already hinted to her, that she cared for him more than was maidenly to care for a man who had never given her reason to consider him anything more than a friend. O no! it was too horrible an idea. She would not even suffer it in her mind, or fancy for one moment that it had influenced his; but it sent the blood burning into her cheeks, and roused every bit of pride in her nature, to hide away any spark of feeling or concern at the Canadian's departure from the man who had been his enemy, and whom she considered hers.

"Mamma will write and thank Mr. M'Kenzie for his kindness," she said, more frigidly than before. Poor little Kate! She little knew how that very frigidity betrayed her as being so different from her usual manner. "I dare say he will be very glad to be relieved of the burden."

"O dear, no! I don't think he considered it a burden at all, but rather a very pleasant trust," said Clive, good-naturedly. "However, if you really prefer to keep George here—"

"Mrs. Dobson has found a bed for him," repeated Kate, and then stood up. "Shall we go into the house? I will call Dottie first. She has not seen you."

"Don't call her just yet," said Clive, hurriedly—"that is, if you don't mind staying out a little longer. I have something more to say to you."

"From Mr. M'Kenzie also?" asked Kate, very carelessly, though her pulses thrilled with eagerness to know what it was. "But you can say it as we walk along."

"I would rather say it here, if you don't object," said Clive; "and it is not from Mr. M'Kenzie, but myself."

Kate's eagerness died on the instant. She sat down on a stone, because the wind would blow her hair into her eyes, and twist her clothes round her like a rope, and she could feel more dignified and at ease when not embarrassed by flapping drapery and blinding curls.

"Another quarrel, I suppose!" she said to herself, with an involuntary shrug of her shoulders.

"Well, Mr. Clive?" (this aloud.)

"Kate, will you be my wife?"

Off went Kate's hat. She had been trying to keep it on her head; but this was too much for her. Her hands dropped upon her lap, and the hat flew off, and, after executing a wild gambol on the beach, lodged in a pool of water between a couple of huge stones. No one noticed it.

"MR. CLIVE!" she said, indignantly.

"Are you surprised?" said Clive, smiling a little. If he was nervous he did not show it. "I dare say that is not the proper way of asking; but, Kate, I ought to have told you first that I love you. I have loved you for some time back, and—"

"Are you laughing at me?" cried Kate, with scarlet cheeks and flashing eyes. "Mr. Clive, this is not a subject for a joke. You forget yourself."

"I don't mean it for a joke," said Clive, quietly. "I should be forgetting myself indeed if I did. Yes, I dare say you are surprised. I was myself when I first found it out; and I don't mind telling you I fought against it with all my might, for you have not been very kind to me, and"—with another smile—"you are not perfect, you know, Kate." (Kate gave a little wrathful jump, and the fingers of her right hand doubled convulsively; but some feelings cannot be expressed in words.) "You

are not even at all like the ideal which I—like most men, I expect—had of my future wife; but I suppose you were more bewitching than my ideal. At any rate, you have bewitched me; for I love you, honestly and truly, better than I think I should ever have loved her even if I had met her, better than I have ever loved any woman yet—barring my mother."

"If you are not joking, you mean to insult me. Is this your revenge, Mr. Clive?" cried Kate.

"Revenge! What for?" said Clive. "O!"—with rather a scornful smile—"our quarrel last night, you mean! Well, you were unjust, and you hurt me. I had come to the house meaning to tell you what I have told you now; and you greeted me by calling me a murderer. Rather hard lines for any man, you'll allow yourself; but as to revenge, and on a girl too! You were laughing when you said that. And, indeed, after I left you I remembered that you were a child, after all, and that my appearance, combined with the cock-and-bull story you had heard, was sufficient to frighten you, and set your little head running on murders and the like. I was angry with you for being unjust to me; but it was more unjust of me to be angry when I should have recollected what a child you were."

"I am nineteen," said Kate, with an emphasis which would have been imposing if she had said nine-and-thirty—"If you call that a child!"

"Nineteen?" repeated Clive. "Only that! Poor little thing; and I expected you to have the reason and common sense of a man. Nineteen! Why, I was a fool to be offended with you. No wonder you've thought me hard; but, Kate, I do love you; and, God helping me, I'll be a good husband to you, if you'll only try to love me, and be my wife."

He had bent down and taken her two hands in his as he spoke; but Kate snatched them away with a promptitude and look which showed that if she could have boxed his ears with them, she would.

"I—never—was—so insulted in my life," she panted, breathlessly.

"Insulted!" echoed Clive, opening his eyes. "Do you call a man asking you to be his wife, insulting you?"

"Yes, I do," answered Kate, hotly, "when that man is—is you. Yes, Mr. Clive, you may look at me if you like; but

it is an insult. Why, you have never said a civil word or done a civil action for me in your life. You have hardly ever listened to me without a contradiction, or looked at me without a sneer. From the very first day you came to our house, you have seemed to take a pleasure in showing me how cheap you held me, and how little you cared for my good opinion, or the reverse. You have been rude to me at home, and impertinent to me here. You have quarrelled with my friends, and done everything you could to make me dislike you; and then—then you have the courage to come to me and say, 'Will you be my wife?' No, Mr. Clive, I will not; and you know it perfectly well—as well as you know that your asking me is what I call it—an insult."

"Then that is your answer?" said Clive, so quietly, it seemed more as if he were speaking to himself. "Well, I might have known; for, after all, I was right, and he wrong."

"I don't know who 'he' is," said Kate, coloring very much, as for the first time some flash of thought connected Clive's proposal with M'Kenzie's departure, "but it is you, certainly, who have been wrong."

"In allowing myself to love you?" said Clive. "Yes, I suppose so. I told you I struggled against it."

"It is a pity you gave in," cried Kate, with a scornful toss of her lovely little head, round which the wavy brown locks were blowing out in the breeze like those of a young Diana. "Love! I don't think you know what it is, when you don't think the object of it worth even liking. You call me a child, and you talk of my faults; but, Mr. Clive, I am not a child. I am nineteen, and a woman; and I have a right to be treated with courtesy and deference, like other women. You may be able to love people whom you dislike, despise and ridicule as you do me; but I am not. I could never love any one whom I did not think more—much more of than I do myself. You ask me to be your wife! and you have never even tried to win me for a friend. I would have been your friend, for Dick's sake, if you had wanted it; I would never be your wife. Mr. Clive, if a woman is worth taking, she is certainly worth winning; and you, at any rate, have never tried to win me."

"If you mean that I have not talked a heap of nonsensical flattery to you, and

quoted poetry—" began Clive; but Kate was in a passion, and interrupted him.

"I don't mean that. I mean that you have treated me like a baby, or a toy, to be laughed at, played with, or flung on one side, just as you in your superior lordship think fit. There are other men like you who do so, and go about in a grand 'haw, haw' way among ladies, until they think they have cowed us into proper awe and admiration, and all the time we are laughing—O, you can't think how we laugh at you among ourselves; and when you deign to fall in love with us, as you call it, and show us that you think we are so frantic to get married that we will even accept you after all this, we are glad—yes, Mr. Clive, *glad!*—to tell you that we would rather marry the poorest and plainest man living. Marry?" cried Kate, with flaming cheeks and clasped hands; "why, if it came to that, I would rather be even an—*an old maid*—yes, much rather."

"Have you done?" said Clive, with a pale angry smile, and a voice whose forced coolness was a marked contrast to the impetuous outburst which had preceded it. "If so, allow me to bid you good-morning, and to assure you that since your preference turns to old-maidhood, I think you are quite certain to achieve it by simply repeating the tirade with which you have favored me, to the next man who pays you the greatest proof of respect in his power, by trusting his honor to your hands, and asking you to be his wife. I need hardly say how deeply I regret having done so. Good-by."

He lifted his hat as he spoke, and turned away; but at that moment Dottie, having suddenly caught sight of him, threw down her spade, and came running up to claim his companionship. Kate tried to detain her, and Olive walked on fast, pretending not to hear his name shouted behind him; but Dottie was not to be baffled, and pursued him as fast as her short legs would carry her, until at last he turned round, and caught her up in his arms, asking what she wanted.

"Me—wants—oo," cried Dottie, panting very much, and bringing out her words in little apoplectic jerks. "Tum and play wis me. Do, Misser Kive, an' mats cat's-cwaddles, will oo?"

"Not to-day, Dottie; I can't. I'm going away to London," said Clive, so gravely

that Dottie linked her fat hands behind his neck, and looked inclined to whimper.

"Don't do away to Lonnon; me wants oo to 'top here wis me," she said, plaintively.

"Do you, little lassie? I'm afraid that you're in the minority in that wish," said Clive, smiling, but speaking rather huskily still. "But I can't stay, anyhow; so kiss me, Dottie, like a good little girl, will you? and say good-by."

"Dood-by," said Dottie, whimpering, and giving him the required kiss very heartily. "Tum back quick, Misser Kive—do tum back quick;" and then she ran away to tell Kate that "poor Misser Kive had to do all ze way to Lonnon, an' wouldn't she tell him to tum back quick."

Kate scolded her a little, telling her that it was very naughty of little girls to run after gentlemen in that way, and that she didn't think it at all likely that Mr. Clive would ever come back—whereat Dottie wept; and Kate walked off in an injured and dignified frame of mind to get her hat. It did not add to her peace of mind, to see it swollen and soaked in the pool aforementioned, with its pretty blue ribbons all stained and spoilt. She picked it up, gave it an angry little shake, and walked home, holding it in her hand, the fresh seabreeze blowing over her uncovered head, and taking wild liberties with every frill and ribbon-end of her fluttering draperies.

How dared he insult her so! To ask her to marry him after making himself so consistently unpleasant to her, and quarrelling with M'Kenzie, and all! Why, the enormity of it almost took away her breath, without any help from the wind; and now, to add to it, came another thought; had he not done worse—much worse than merely quarrelling with M'Kenzie—had he not driven him away?

Full of her wrongs, Kate had swept on at a pace decidedly trying to Dottie's shortness of limb and breath, and having now arrived at the cottage, rushed full tilt into the parlor, where Dick was lying on his back on the sofa, a cigarette between his lips, and the newspaper in his hand.

"Dick! O Dick!" cried Kate, shutting the door abruptly, and flying to his side, "what do you think has happened? O, you will never guess."

"Don't want to," said Dick. "My dear child, I wish you'd be more gentle in your

movements. You nearly made me swallow my cigarette whole, by springing on me in that way. And where's Clive? Hasn't he come in too?"

"No, he hasn't," said Kate, severely, "and I don't think he will come in very soon. Dick"—and she clasped both hands on his shoulders, to emphasize what she was going to say—"what—do—you—think he has been saying to me?"

"What?" asked Dick, a half-smile showing at the corners of his mouth.

"He asked me to marry him! There!"

"O, indeed? He's got over it quicker than I thought"—and Dick laughed. "These lawyer fellows don't waste much time on spooning, to a certainty."

"Dick, you don't mean to say that you knew he was going to—to do it?"

"Well, rather! At least, he spoke to me at breakfast this morning, and I told him to try his chance."

"O Dick."

"And I hope you behaved properly, and said, 'Yes, thank you,' like a good little girl. You're uncommonly lucky, let me tell you, mademoiselle; for if it had been any one but old Clive who had wanted you, I'm not sure I'd have been so civil to him."

"Dick! But, O! you're joking and you guess what I did tell him, that I thought he was very impertinent, and that I'd never been so insulted in my life."

"Nonsense! You didn't."

"I did, and I told him that I wouldn't marry him if there was not another man in the world; and that I'd rather be an old maid by far, and—"

"You told him *that*?"

"Yes, indeed I did; and I told him that to ask me at all, after being as rude and disagreeable as ever he could be ever since he came to the house, was a direct insult—and so it was, you know. I wonder how he dared, and I told him so."

"You did?" cried Dick, flinging cigarette and paper on one side, and jerking Kate's hands off his shoulder as he rose to his feet in a tempest. "Then I'll never speak to you again."

"Dick!" cried his sister, pale with dismay.

"Indeed I wont. What! you went and abused a man like a fishwife, because he had the civility to ask you to marry him! Why, I never heard of such a thing in all my life."

"But, Dick—dear Dick—don't be so angry. Mr. Clive has never even been the least pleasant to me, or—"

"Bah! you mean to say that he's never made a fool of himself by simpering at your apron-strings like a great sentimental moon-calf. If that's what you like—O, I've no patience with you. To go and treat an honest sensible fellow like Bernard Clive—my best friend, too—in that shameful way, and then to boast of it! I declare it makes me ashamed to have a sister."

"O Dick!" cried Kate, beginning to cry quite broken-heartedly at this severity, "how c-c-c-cruel you are! I n-n-never thought you would t-take it in that way. O, I wish mamma were here!"

"I wish she were," retorted her tyrant, austere. "You'd soon hear what she'd say."

"I'm sure mamma would never wish me to marry Mr. Clive," cried Kate, warmly.

"Then you're quite wrong," replied Dick, "for I believe she'd like it very much. She's always praising him, and wishing I were cut out of the same cloth, and that sort of rubbish; and I'm sure she makes as much use of him as if he were her son-in-law already. She'll have to give it up now, and thank you for it. There!"

"O, but, Dick," pleaded his sister, with big tears in her eyes, and others running plentifully down her flushed cheeks, as she half-sat half-kneelt on the floor by the sofa, her hands clasped helplessly over the head of it, "mamma couldn't wish me to marry any one I don't love; and I don't even like Mr. Clive; he never tried to make me; but perhaps he is different with you, and—"

"Different with me!" echoed Dick, contemptuously. "I should think he was different with me. I can appreciate him; and I've good right to do so, too. Why, I might be in gaol now, but for him. He denies it, of course, but I'm morally certain he's paying off those confounded debts of mine out of his own earnings; and when I'm going to repay him I don't know; it'll be hard enough to scrape the interest together. As for the principal, I expect he knows very well he wont see it. And you go and fly in his face, and insult him! O, it's too bad. Like him, indeed! If you were not so abominably selfish, you would like him, if only for what he's done for me. I'd like to see any other of your fine-spoken lovers doing the same, or one-half of it. Why, good

heavens! at this very moment I'm depending on him to get me out of the worst scrape I've ever been in, in my life; and after your treatment of course he'll go and throw it all up, and turn his back on me; and I shall have a breach of promise case on my shoulders, and—"

Kate hid her face, and sobbed again.

"I am very sorry," she said at last, going up to her brother, and clasping her hands pleadingly on his arm, "but I can't help it now; and, Dick, don't be angry with me—don't, darling. I *couldn't* marry Mr. Clive—indeed I couldn't."

"You couldn't tell him so civilly either, I suppose," retorted Dick, not looking at her, and rather drawing himself out of the soft grasp of those coaxing fingers. "It isn't enough to humiliate a man who pays you the compliment of wanting to make you his wife, but you must taunt him with his rejection."

"I am very sorry," repeated Kate, with blushing earnestness. "I suppose I was wrong; but he had provoked me, so I got into a passion, and didn't think what I said.

If you knew all—But, Dick dear, it is done now, and can't be undone. I tell you I am sorry. What can I say more?"

"Tell *him* so," said Dick, quickly. "Write him a line and apologize, and say you hope he won't remember—"

"No, Dick," said Kate, turning scarlet at the mere idea, and receding a step from her brother, "I can't do that. I don't mind saying anything to you; but Mr. Clive is quite another thing. I could not. You must not even ask me."

"Then I'll never speak to you again," said Dick, "and I'll go up to town to-morrow, and see Fanny, and let her fix the day when she pleases; and I'll let Clive know he needn't do anything further in the matter. You've turned him out of the house, and I'm not going to make use of him. There!"

He waited a moment, and then, finding that Kate would not yield or answer, walked out of the room, and banged the door behind him.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

## A PRETTY YOUNG LADY.

## A TALE OF HOME LIFE.

BY THEO. GIFT.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

## KATE ASKS ADVICE.

MRS. GREY was sitting in a large chintz-covered armchair near the window, her head turned back against the cushions—her hands lying wearily over some piece of plain sewing in her lap. The evening light fell across the lattice panes, and threw a checkered yellow glow upon the pale beautiful face, over which sorrow and sickness were slowly weaving a mortal cloud. She did not even open her eyes to greet the kiss or the sunbeams as they flickered through the green-gold tapestry of vine leaves at the window; or see how one red slanting beam had illumined with a living glory her picture, which stood finished upon the easel before her. She was weary, utterly spent and weary, dying of loneliness and starvation—that worst starvation of the heart; and within that heart was only one prayer and one hope, that so forcibly expressed by the psalmist: "Reproach hath broken my heart, and I am full of heaviness; and I looked for some to take pity on me, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none."

She had now been at the farmhouse for three weeks, and to her feelings it might have been three years, or even more; and perhaps the mild gleam of excitement created by Kate's appearance and visit had made her doubly sensible of the subsequent blank. At first the young girl's lively interest in, and admiration of, her sketch, had spurred her up to taking more interest in it herself. She had worked at it hard during the three days after Kate's visit, sitting at it till the dusk of twilight rendered longer painting impracticable; and it was now completed; but the last evening had been very damp, and she, being only recently recovered from the nervous illness which had followed on her departure from Lady Vanborough's, caught a severe feverish cold, which again confined her to her room, and left her almost as weak as a child.

If Kate had come then, how welcome she would have been! But Kate was otherwise occupied, and had no time to spare for thinking of the lonely inmate of that homely farmhouse.

The little farmhouse maid waited on the invalid very civilly. The farmer's wife looked in morning and evening to hope as "her wur doin' nicely like;" and now and then the farmer's baby toddled to the door, finger in mouth, to gaze with wide-open wondering eyes at the poor sick lady with the pretty hair, and whose face always melted into such a longing loving smile, when his round and ruddy one appeared in the doorway. Once or twice Mrs. Grey had coaxed him in, and, by means of "sweeties," installed him on her knee, where he sat in huge content till, taking sudden alarm at the unwonted amount of kissing and fondling bestowed upon him, his fat under lip was protruded in most portentous fashion, his small face puckered itself up; and he was swiftly removed by the little maid, in fear of one of those direful roars which, once evoked, are by no means so easy to still. Mrs. Grey would fain have kept him with her, roar or no, and soothed him into happiness again with more sweeties; but the little maid was decided on the subject, and Enoch Stebbings was forcibly evicted, and seen no more for the day.

If only he had been her own, to hold, and kiss, and keep with her against all the world! If even she had the remembrance of such a child to cherish in her heart of hearts, and know was hers still in heaven, though God, in that inscrutable wisdom which is so hard, so pitifully hard, to fathom on earth, had seen fit to take it from her for a while! To many women it would have seemed better never to have had a thing than to have been robbed of it, to have given up the transient pleasure rather than suffer the after-pain. It had been so with Mrs. Grey in the days of her health. She had even thanked God that she was childless, as for a great mercy, and shivered to think what the life of any child of hers



might have been. It was not so now. When the bodily health is strong and firm, the mind may well be firm and strong also; but pain and sickness had shivered that calm gentleness and patience which had withstood so many an onslaught from without; and with the new sense of weakness came a great yearning to have some one at her side, something of her own to love and be loved by. "'Tis better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all."

"How do you do? and may I come in?"

With a quick nervous start, strongly suggestive of her weakened nerves, the invalid opened her eyes, and saw at the window, framed in green vine leaves, and relieved against the golden sky, a fair young face, with sweet red lips parted in a smile, half saucy and half shy, with rounded glowing cheeks, and eyes sweeter and more glowing than lips or cheeks, smiling in at her from under the shadow of a broad straw hat, and over the pots of scarlet-blossomed geraniums which lined the window-sill.

"Are you at home?" asked Kate, resting her round white chin on the broad geranium leaves, and smiling in happy confidence of not being said "No" to.

"How ill you are looking! You have been worse, much worse, I'm sure; and O, what a wretch I am!"

"Yes, I have been worse," said Mrs. Grey, smiling too, but with that soft gentle smile, which had less of gladness than sweetness in it. "But I don't know what that has to do with your being a wretch. Come in and tell me what makes you call yourself one. It is very kind of you to come so far to see me," she added, when Kate had obeyed. "Do you know I was thinking of you a great deal this morning, and wondering if I should ever see you again."

"I should think you were wondering!" retorted Kate, with a sort of comic remorse. "Ten days—nearly a fortnight—isn't it? And I was to have come back in a day or two to see the picture finished! What a horrid, neglectful, promise-breaking sort of person you must think me!"

"On the contrary, I think you a very nice little person," said Mrs. Grey, smiling. Kate's sunshiny presence had swept the clouds out of her mind like breath from a glass. "It is very good of you to come and see me at all. And as to the picture, there it is, ready for your inspection. What do you think of it?"

"I?" said Kate, drawing back from the canvas over which she had been stooping, and putting her head on one side to view it *à l'artiste*. "Why, I'll tell you. I think you are some grand painter come down here incognito. And, by the way, are you aware that you haven't told me your name yet?"

She turned round as she spoke, fixing her bright frank eyes in innocent inquiry on Mrs. Grey's face; and over the transparent whiteness of the latter crept a faint dull flush.

"If only I could tell her truly," was the painful thought hidden in a moment's hesitation, and then came the answer:

"Clewer—Edith Clewer."

"Miss or Mrs.?" laughed Kate. "Don't you feel as if you were saying your catechism—'M or N, as the case may be?'—but you see one must know how to call you."

"Mrs.," said Mrs. Grey, quietly.

"Thank you," said Kate. "I hardly needed to ask that, though; for I had somehow so taken it for granted that I never thought of looking at your left hand. Of course," with a merry laugh, "Mrs. Clewer is only a fictitious title."

"Only a—I don't know what you mean."

But as she spoke the widow's transient color faded out into a deader white than before; and Kate grew carnation crimson under the stern look in her eyes.

"I beg your pardon," she said, impulsively. "Don't be vexed with me, for I was only joking; but don't you know how authors take *noms de plume*? and I thought if you were a swell artist you might only condescend to give us your *nom de—*what's the name for paint-brush? but it was only in fun. I *hope* you are not vexed"—the last words said so earnestly that Mrs. Grey put out her hand with a smile at once reassuring and reassured.

"Vexed! No," she said. "Why should you think it?"

"You looked as if you were."

"Don't pay heed to my looks then. An invalid is not accountable for them. Tell me instead what the world has been doing with you all this while."

"Just what I am going to do," said Kate, briskly; "that is, to show you why I have not been here. But, besides, I want to ask your advice dreadfully; only it is so difficult to know where to begin."

"Try the beginning," suggested Mrs. Grey, pleasantly. "When I saw you last

you had a sister dangerously ill, and—"

"O, well, she's getting all right now. Mamma has taken her down to Eastbourne, and as soon as the doctor says it is quite safe we are going to join them. She took the turn on the day I had intended coming to see you again, only I was prevented by Mr. M'—by a person coming to see us."

Kate stopped here to swallow a great annoying blush, which would somehow creep all over her pretty face and throat; and Mrs. Grey smiled.

"Well?" she said.

"The—the person—a friend of ours, stayed for three or four days," Kate went on with extra dignity, to compensate for the blush which declined to go away. "He came all the way from London, you see; so he wanted a rest; and indeed his visit was not so much to us as to please my little brother who was staying with him, and had got homesick for a sight of us. Don't you think it was very kind of him to humor the boy?"

"Very kind," said Mrs. Grey, smiling still.

"I like to see grown-up people fond of dogs and children. It is a good trait, I think," said Kate, solemnly.

Mrs. Grey acquiesced.

"And of course, though it gave me a good deal to do, it was very pleasant having George back with us. George is my brother," added Kate, quickly, as anxious to show that the visitor had nothing to do with her pleasure.

Mrs. Grey nodded.

"And then Mr. Clive came. You know him—about him, I mean?"

"In connection with—with Mrs. Grey," put in the invalid, not coloring, but with evident distress. "But you don't mean to say that he is—here!"

"Here!"—opening big brown eyes of horror—"O dear! no; of course not. He went away directly afterwards—I mean"—with some confusion—"he only staid two days."

The anxious look faded out of Mrs. Grey's face, and she breathed freely.

"Not a very long visit," she said, with wellbred ignoring of Kate's slip of the tongue.

"That depends," answered the girl, petulantly. "It may be two days too long if people don't get on well together. But there! I'm not going to blame him," she added, with some remorse. "I do believe

he means well, and that it is only his way. Besides, I was wrong myself; but it is so unpleasant when one visitor makes himself disagreeable to another, and for no reason at all. Mr. M——, the other person, is so different, so gentle and pleasant, and not a bit like the young men about town. I get very tired of London young men, do you know," said Kate, with a sigh of middle-aged weariness for the follies of youth. "They are so—so frightfully same and idealess. If only one of them would *try* to pronounce his *r*'s, and care a little about *anything*, it would be a relief; but when it's 'bad form' to talk, or look, or act among women as if you were anything but a rag-doll stuffed with sawdust—well, one can't help feeling it's pleasant to meet a person who has something in him, and doesn't mind showing it."

"Very pleasant," said Mrs. Grey, smiling, and stroking the pretty hand which rested on the arm of her chair, as one might stroke a kitten's back, half unconsciously; "but, do you know, I think Bernard Clive has a great deal in him. At least"—recollecting herself—"I have always heard so."

"Exactly *why* I dislike him," retorted Kate. "Yes"—in answer to a mild look of wonder in the blue eyes facing her—"for if a person is a rag-doll stuffed with sawdust he can't help it; but to know that a man is clever and sensible, but that he doesn't think it worth while to throw away either quality on you, except to snub you, because you're only a girl—well, girls don't like it, whatever they may think."

There was a dash of bitterness in the tone, and Mrs. Grey, reading it by the light of her greater experience, said to herself:

"If Bernard knew how, he might win her yet—but for the 'other person.' Yes, I am afraid that other person has won the race."

"He is so infinitely superior to us that of course it is an infinite condescension when he speaks to us at all," Kate went on with rising color. "But there, poor fellow! Dick says he can't help it. Perhaps if he had gone to Canada when he was young—by the way, I wonder if all Anglo-Canadians are pleasant?"

"*Anglo-Canadians!*" repeated Mrs. Grey, huskily. The hand still softly stroking Kate's was drawn away, and clasped tightly over the other, and she raised her head

from the cushions with a startled questioning look.

"Yes," said Kate, carelessly, "because, if so, I would like to go and live there. But, dear me, how ill you are looking! Am I tiring you? If so, I'll go away at once, and ask your advice about my difficulty another time."

"No, I am not tired," said Mrs. Grey, rather faintly; and though she tried to smile, there was a look in her eyes as though, but for long habit of patience, she would fain have asked something on her own account. "What is your difficulty? Not that I am a good adviser. A person should have known how to order their own affairs successfully before they presume to advise others; and I—but your trouble may be an easy one to remedy. Let us hear."

"It isn't one trouble, but two," said Kate, confidentially. "And the big one hasn't to do with myself so much as my brother. I have several brothers, you know, so I won't mention which it is, because, though he is the *very* best and dearest fellow in the world, I'm afraid he has been a wee bit foolish in this. You see, mamma and I hoped he would read down here; but—but he doesn't like reading by himself; and of course I can't help him; I'm too stupid; so when mamma sent the governess down to look after us some days ago, she was to have D—my brother's room, and he was to go down to read with a clerical friend in Wales. He didn't like going at all, poor boy. In fact he was—was rather cross about it, and didn't want any of us to see him off. However, I would go to the station with him, and then I saw he had taken his ticket for London. Of course I thought it was by mistake, and said so; but he said it didn't matter, as he had to pass through London en route, in order to see Mr. Clive on business. Now, I don't see how London can be en route from Combe Regis to Llandudno! However, the dear boy was so put out, I didn't like to say anything; and he desired me not to mention it to any one, as he should only stay a few hours in London, and his business with Mr. Clive was strictly private. But, Mrs. Clewer, twenty-four hours after he was gone a letter came from Mr. Clive addressed to him *here*; and since then a post-card from his friend in Wales, saying that his room has been three days waiting for him; and that two letters have arrived to his address—one from Eastbourne

(that's mother), and one from the Temple (that's Mr. Clive). So, you see, he *can't* have seen him, after all; and, if mamma writes to him, she can't have seen or heard from him either; and yet I know he arrived safely, for I had a line from him the evening he arrived in London, bidding me not to write to him at Llandudno till I had first heard from him. And—and I am so afraid something is wrong, and I don't know whether I ought to write to mamma. Dick would be very angry, I know; but still if I ought—do tell me what you think."

"But what do you mean by wrong?" asked Mrs. Grey, kindly. "Your brother may have been detained on other business. How old is he?"

"Twenty-one. Only a boy, you see, poor fellow!" said Kate, shaking her nineteen-year-old head mournfully. "But—but—well, the fact is that there is a person—a young person in London at present, and I don't quite understand about it, but she will—will *insist* on marrying him; and she isn't even a lady, and Mr. Clive is trying to arrange with her; but I do wish mamma knew, for Dick is foolish sometimes; and O, it would be so dreadful!"

"I understand," said Mrs. Grey, quietly. "My dear, since you ask my advice, take it, and tell your mother at least what you have told me. It is always a mistake to keep anything, even trifles, from our parents when we are young; and marriage is no trifle. It is a thing too solemn to be trusted to any risks—a thing which, once done, can never be undone, as long as life lasts—lasts! and, ah! how long it lasts sometimes!"

Her eyes were looking far away into the gold-tinted waves of western sky. The boughs of the great pinky-blossomed horse-chestnut outside swayed softly in the breeze, and cast wavering shadows on her pale sunset-lighted face. Kate, sobered into a kind of awe, looked up at her half shyly, half wondering.

"I will write to-night if I don't hear anything more," she said, drawing a long breath. "I hope he won't be *very* angry; but when he first spoke to me in confidence he did not give me an idea what she really was; and if it will save him, it is better even that he should be angry. O dear!"—with another sigh—"I'm glad I asked you."

Mrs. Grey turned round, as if suddenly recalled to the subject in question by the sound of the girl's voice.

"So am I," she said, "for there can be little risk in advising you to have no secrets from your mother. But you said you had another trouble."

"Not a trouble—only a doubt," corrected Kate; "and I hardly know how to tell you, for it is so ridiculously tiny, you will be sure to laugh at me."

"No, I will promise not to do that."

"And of course I can't mention names: indeed, if you were a friend of ours I could not tell you at all, because you would guess whom I meant, and it wouldn't be fair or right. That is just my difficulty at present; but I have been making such mistakes, and vexing mamma and all by acting for myself, that it would be a help to have a quite impartial person's advice. And I am sure you will keep all I say to yourself."

Mrs. Grey said she might be sure.

"Well," said Kate, plaiting the hem of her tunic busily between her fingers, "you must know that Bee Vanborough—that is the lady your relation lives with—has asked me to go on a visit to her as soon as the others are settled at Eastbourne; and mamma is willing that I should, because, since Dick doesn't want me, she thinks it is a pity that I should miss the whole of the season; and for that matter, so do I."

Mrs. Grey nodded.

"That is the preface," said Kate. "Then"—smiling a little, and blushing very much—"there is a—a person—in fact, a friend of the family—who was down here a while ago, and left rather suddenly. I—we were rather offended about it at the time, but he—this person wrote to me—only a line, you know—the other day, explaining and apologizing, and thanking us for our kindness very nicely, and—and I am wondering now, *ought* I to go to Lady Vanborough's."

"My dear! why not?" asked Mrs. Grey, raising her eyebrows the eighth part of an inch.

"He—he put a postscript, too," said Kate, hanging her head, "and he said that—"

"Well?"

"That he hoped soon to see me at Lady Vanborough's, and clear away any—any bad impression his abruptness, or any other circumstance, might have left upon my mind, and—"

"Well?"—smiling.

"Well!" cried Kate, with a burst, "is it

right—is it dignified, when people will combine to tease you about a person you only like as a friend, and who only likes *you* as a—a friend too, to do anything that spiteful people could say was giving encouragement to—to anything—though, you know, there isn't anything to be encouraged, and nobody wants to be encouraged. Such nonsense!" cried Kate, angrily; "and for Bee herself to join in it! As if Mr. M'Kenzie were not much too sensible—"

"M'Kenzie!" repeated Mrs. Grey. She half rose as she spoke, her limbs trembling, and in her face a white horror-struck look; but Kate was too much occupied with her own little girlish trouble to pay heed to her.

"Did I say M'Kenzie?" she asked, biting her lips confusedly. "How stupid—how very stupid of me! Please, please not to say or think of it again, for I am vexed and ashamed enough already. And only think, if people were to talk to him as they have done to me!"

"M'Kenzie!" said Mrs. Grey, again; "is *he*, then, the Canadian you spoke of?" She did not heed Kate either. These two women were so absorbed in their own emotions that neither even perceived those of the other; and outside, the low red sunlight rested on the vine leaves, and turned the geraniums to drops of fire; the bees drummed among the honeysuckle sprays; far away, a dog was barking from a distant cottage; and further still, in the intervals of silence, came a faint deep murmur, the boom of the surf on the rocky shore where M'Kenzie had so nearly lost his life.

"Not exactly a Canadian," said Kate. "He is Scotch by birth. Mamma knew a relation of his—Colonel Dallas. By the way, that is his Christian name. Dallas M'Kenzie. Doesn't it sound nice? Why—why, Mrs. Clewer—O! what is the matter?"

For Mrs. Grey, without a word or cry, had fallen face foremost, a senseless heap of soft white drapery, and softer whiter womanhood, prone on the floor at Kate Bellew's feet!

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### ON THE TERRACE WALK.

"I DON'T pretend to understand anything but that you are a little goose, Katie, my dear," Lady Vanborough said, one morning; "and you know, if you will behave like a baby, other people will make remarks."

"In that case I had better not go to Mrs. Gore's to-night, and then they will have no occasion to do so," Kate answered, with head erect and quivering lip.

She made it up with Bee later—owning that she had been "cross," and making a great show of interest in the latter's toilet for the evening. But it was a positive relief to her when, on entering the crowded brilliantly-lit rooms at half past ten that night, the first person her eyes fell upon was, not Dallas M'Kenzie, but Bernard Clive. His face was turned towards the door, so that, even before the pillar of claret and silver stationed thereat had shouted, "Lady Vanb'ro' 'n Miss B'lew!" at the top of a sonorous voice, his eye had caught Kate's newly timid glance peeping from behind her chaperon's broad shoulders, and he had conquered the strong impulse to turn away and leave the room on the very first convenient opportunity. Instead, he waited till she came near, and then saluted her as usual—a trifle awkwardly perhaps, but then it is not easy for a man to feel perfectly unembarrassed at his first meeting with a girl after she has refused him. Rather to his surprise, Kate stopped, and held out her hand.

"I did not expect to meet you," she said, with a smile which showed how little impression the fracas with him had made on her mind, and which perhaps hurt him more than coldness or constraint would have done. "Have you heard from Dick lately?"

"Not very. I heard from your mother yesterday," he answered, keeping at her side, as indeed he was obliged to do so as to reply to her.

"From mamma? Ah, dear, I wish she were here! What did she say?"

"That she wished *you* were there," he said, smiling, but with a little wonder in his tone at the trouble expressed in hers. "But that was only at the end. She wrote about that affair of Dick's—I understand you told her something of it."

"I thought—that is, I was advised"—Kate began, but was relieved by a dictatorial—

"O, quite right! quite right! Much better for girls to have no secrets from their parents. Besides"—in a different tone—"it was rather a relief to me, since, as it had resolved itself into a money question, I required family assistance as to raising it.

You'll be glad to know that I think it is settled now. Lord Lovegoats has consented—"

"What! does Uncle Theo know?" cried Kate, in dismay. "O, will Dick ever forgive me?"

"We thought it better he should know nothing of your having spoken to your mother, or the subsequent arrangements," said Clive, kindly, as he saw the distress in her eyes. "Dick is rather difficult to manage on some subjects, you know; and as, if Lord Lovegoats gets him this Irish post, he must work hard for the Civil Service Exam., he had better remain where he is. He seems wonderfully contented there. I do not hear a growl or—"

"Is your card already full, Miss Bellew?"

It was Mr. M'Kenzie's voice, and in one second Kate forgot Dick, Clive, Civil Service Exams., everything and everybody in the world except the man whose mere voice had made her very shoulders rosy within their framing of soft tulle. Clive saw, and turned away with a sharp inward pang.

"Is that settled, I wonder?" he thought. "How transparent she is! I wonder if she remembers that day at Combe Regis. Well, I suppose there are some men who can't make themselves cared for."

"I am afraid you will hardly have a dance left to give me," said M'Kenzie; and low and pleasant as his voice was, there was a decided thrill of nervousness in it, which even Kate noticed, and which made her feel more nervous herself.

"I thought you never danced," she said, giving him the tiny white-and-gold tablets which hung at her wrist, with a trustful liberality that moved to envious despair a gay young cornet of hussars who was just making his way through the press to get at her with a similar request.

"I never do dance, but all the same I want you to give me two running, if you will. Will you? I have something to tell you, and I'm afraid I can't do it under two."

He looked at her rather anxiously as he spoke, but Kate had grown suddenly grave and composed.

"Please mark the two," she said, in a very low steady little voice, as though she were taking an affidavit to something; and then, without waiting for his thanks, she turned quickly away to the cornet, gave him a dance near the end, and suffered her-

self to be whirled away in the waltz then playing by a preengaged partner, who had just arrived to claim her in a state of red-hot hurry.

The moment came at last. It was pretty late in the evening, and she had not sat down once till then; but when the first notes of the marked quadrille were heard, a frantic desire came over her to accept the first partner who offered, and escape among the throng. It was not to be, however, for almost in the same moment she heard M'Kenzie's voice, and knew her hour was come.

"You look very pale," he said, offering her his arm, and speaking in a quiet easy way which a little reassured her. "Just now, when I was looking at you across the room, I thought you were going to faint. That dance was too fast for anything. Do you not feel these rooms frightfully oppressive? they are so overcrowded."

Kate was struggling with an inward shiver at the moment, but she said "Yes" in perfect good faith. He ought to know better than she did; at any rate, she was prepared to think so.

"Let us go out on the terrace," said M'Kenzie. "Have you seen how prettily the gardens are lighted? This young Gore knows how to do things well; and what a handsome pair he and his wife are! They must be proud of one another. Stay, wait a moment. We mustn't have you catching cold, must we? I think this is Lady Vanborough's." And he caught up a white fleecy shawl, and wrapped it round Kate's pretty shoulders with careful hands, before taking her out into the cool summer night.

The house was a large old-fashioned one, not far from Fulham, and situated on the banks of the river. The drawing-room windows opened on to a broad terrace walk, paved with red and white Roman tiles, with a marble balustrade covered with creeping plants running round it, and here and there stands and vases of flowers, interspersed with wicker chairs and cushioned lounges. Below, the garden sloped down in bands of soft turf and brilliant flowers, to a croquet-lawn shaded by fine old sycamores; and then came another slope, and a second terrace bordering the river, which flowed outside like a broad black band, splashed here and there with silver, between them and the opposite shore. The night was sweet and warm, a light breath of air just stirring

the surface of the glassy mirror below, and sending wafts of fragrance from the flowers into the envying nostrils of late passers by the Fulham road. Here and there among the trees glimmered the red or orange light of a Chinese lantern; but high over the silvered foliage and glistening water rode, amid her court of shining stars, the radiant queen of night, enthroned within a sky of deep brilliant blue, and casting a purer spiritual light on three girls who, in their shining ball-dresses, and with their attendant cavaliers, were attempting an impromptu game of croquet by the mystic light. Other couples were resting between the dances on the scattered seats outside the window; or wandering among the shadowy walks, revealed here and there by the gleam of a lantern; or leaning over the parapet of the lower terrace in (apparently) rapt contemplation of the river rippling below. It looked like a scene in the drama, so pretty and so unreal; and Kate, as leaning on M'Kenzie's arm she too strolled to a bench at one end of the terrace, felt as if the whole scene were a play, in which she was taking a part, and as if something must happen every minute to dispel the illusion, and bring back the sober matter-of-fact of everyday reality. Dallas did not keep her long in suspense.

"Kate," he said, leaning his arms on the balustrade, but turning his head so that he might see Katie's face, white in the moonlight, and looking up with all trustfulness into his from her corner seat under a huge magnolia, "did you know that I had ever been married?"

"No!" said Kate. She said it with a little gasp. This was quite different from what she expected to hear, and perhaps the moonbeams were not at all to blame for the color of her face.

"I thought Clive might have told you." Then, as she shook her head rather indignantly—"Well, never mind; it is so whether you knew it or not. I was married this very month four years ago, at S. Louis-sur-Eaux, in Canada. Two hours after that ceremony my wife and I parted. We have never met since."

He spoke in short husky jerks, with breaks between. This one lasted so long that Kate—poor little Kate! whose face had altered so woefully—plucked up courage to ask:

"And—and she? your wife?"

"She is dead," he said, hoarsely; then, turning and catching Kate's small cold hand between both of his—"O Kate! if it had not been for that I could never have brought you down here this evening. If she had lived, though we might not have met again in this world, I could never have loved another woman—never tried to fill the place left vacant. Katie, forgive me—your dear little face looks pale; but didn't I tell you this was not a pleasant story to hear? If you don't care for me, bid me stop now, and I'll not utter another word of it; for if it's hard to listen to, it's harder still to tell."

He loosed her hand a little as he spoke, but the small fingers closed round his, and the small face looked up to his undaunted.

"Tell me or not, as you think best, Mr. M'Kenzie," she said, bravely. "I know you have had a great deal of trouble; I know you loved her—your wife; it was only right you should."

"It was not right," he answered, almost fiercely. "There was the bitterness of it. Kate, how shall I tell you? I loved her—loved her with the one passion of my life. I won her love in return, and married her at that little Canadian church in the far West; and yet she was not my wife; the love she gave me was not hers to give. She was married already! Whether for my sake, or for the sake of my income and position—who can say—she had lied to me and deceived me; and I learnt it—good heavens! I can hardly bear to think of it now—by a letter from her former husband, given to me ten minutes after I had stood with her at the altar."

Kate said nothing, only her hand, still clasped in his, drew back by ever so little, and the face, a moment past turned up to the moonlight, drooped and hid itself in the shadow of the magnolias. It was enough for M'Kenzie's sensitive nature.

"I thought so!" he said, bitterly. "See! did I not tell you that the wrong she did me was irremediable, since even now—now, after four long years of suffering, it makes a girl who was my friend shrink from me, who am its victim."

"O, don't say that," cried Kate, quickly, her eyes filling at the accusation, "Mr. M'Kenzie, please don't. I did not mean it. Of course I know—every one knows that there are such wicked people. It was only the first hearing of it in this way; and I am so very sorry for you."

"Thank you," he said, pressing the repentant little hand, gently, "and forgive my quick tongue. You see how tried I have been. There isn't much more to tell, and I'll get through it as quickly as possible; only you ought to know how it came about."

"I met her first when I was engaged on some engineering work for the government. She lived with her mother, a widow in very failing health, in a little cottage about half-a-mile from S. Louis-sur-Eaux. A road had been designed which would pass through their cottage, and it was about it that I made their acquaintance. I think I must have fallen in love with her at once; and no wonder! I don't believe any being half so lovely ever walked this earth—no, not even you, Katie, though you're far the fairest thing I've seen on this side of the water; but she was like nothing but one of those mediæval saints you see painted on dead-gold backgrounds with a lily in their hand; or like a lily itself, just so tall and grand and fair, with eyes of that pure serene blue, which looked as if vulgar sin or care could never come near them, and a manner more like an English duchess than a Canadian woman, so sweetly dignified and perfectly refined. It did not seem as if anything on earth could ruffle her temper or sharpen her voice; and when you see what a passionate, irritable sort of fellow I am, you can guess what a haven of rest and sweetness such a nature must have seemed to me."

"The mother was dying, and both of them knew it. At—she told me so, and urged that they should not be disturbed till all was over. They had nothing to say against the disturbance, and of course they were to be fairly compensated. She only prayed me to put it off a while, and—also of course—I agreed. I would, have done as much for any one, let alone her whose lightest wish was already my law."

"The mother died, and she was left alone—more utterly alone than you could imagine, for they lived in great seclusion. She was English-born, and in all the world had only one relative left, a distant cousin in Toronto, who was just leaving for England. It was this which gave me courage to tell her of my love. If she had been rich and happy, she would have seemed too far above me for such as I to woo or win. See what a fool I was Kate, for I at least was an honorable man."

"I won her—not without difficulty; but she owned she loved me, and after that I would take no refusal. The marriage followed as soon as might be; I was eager to possess my prize; she was alone and friendless; and, indeed, once she had yielded, she showed no maidenly affectations for delay, and threw no obstacles in the way.

"We were married, and as we reentered the house a letter was given me. Would that I had got it an hour sooner! It was from her husband, and couched in the most insolent and threatening language. Little wonder! I might have written worse myself under similar circumstances; but it enclosed a copy of the first marriage certificate. It told me that they had been separated for some time on account of his having lost all his money, and being under a cloud. Worst of all, he gave me proof that they had been corresponding up to the last few weeks, quoted details of my own visits, facts about myself told only to her, and which could have been only told by her; and then—then, while I was reading this, and she changing her dress up stairs, the maid came in with a crumpled letter.

"Is this yours, sir? I think you dropped it. I found it under the dining-table."

I took it, but it was not mine. Kate, it was one of his letters to her, dated only ten days back. I have it now. I know every word of it by heart. Child, do you know what I did when I saw it first?"

But Kate made no answer. She might have said, "Killed her," if she had only judged by that fierce white face, and teeth gnawing savagely at his under lip. She only shivered and held her peace.

"I hardly know myself," he went on hoarsely. "I think I went mad, for I tore up into her room, and flung the letter in her face, and trampled on her wedding-dress, and raved and stormed at her, and cursed her for the misery she had brought on me. I was mad, Kate, but it was she who made me so."

Again Kate shivered. All her warm young blood seemed to have turned to ice; but only her eyes asked the question her lips refused to ask.

"She said nothing," he answered, as though she had spoken, "not one word. She stood looking at me with that grand ace of hers set like a marble statue, as stubborn and as unrepentant. I suppose

she had made up her mind to expect it some day, though not so soon; only when my anger broke a little at the sight of her beauty, and I said something of love and excuse, she stopped me with a curt "Let me go; you are insulting me," and swept out of the room without one backward look. I tried to stop her, to extract one word of explanation or sorrow—I remember that, and nothing more just then. I suppose I had a fit of some sort, for I didn't recover consciousness till late in the evening, and she was gone by then. I never saw her again."

"And how—" Kate's quivering lips formed so much after a silence which seemed like an hour; it might have been five minutes in reality.

"How did I hear of her death? This way. I went to Toronto—don't despise me, Katie, but I could not let her disappear thus; and as soon as she was gone, all sorts of excuses for her came into my mind; explanations which she might have given if I had but controlled my passion in the beginning, and let her—I searched for her far and wide; for at least, if money had been her temptation, she should have had the half of mine; but it was no use. Her relation had left Toronto—it was thought, for England; and it was not for many weeks that I discovered the last which had been seen of her was, that she had slept at a certain hotel, and taken a ticket for the Hudson steamer next morning. That steamer burst a boiler, and went down with crew and passengers. The details of the accident were in the very papers containing my advertisements for my wife—my wife! There, don't talk of it. Three days after we parted, and to be snatched away so suddenly! It seemed like a judgment. I wish it could have fallen on me instead. Nay"—as Kate's eyes met his—"I wished it then, at least. Perhaps you will teach me to be grateful for life now. There's very little more for you to hear. I left the army then, went away, and travelled in the south, in Mexico and Chili—anywhere to forget. When I came back to the States I avoided society entirely, went nowhere, and never spoke to a woman if I could help it. I came to England, and I met you, my little dark-eyed English girl. It was quite by chance. I had been obliged to make some new acquaintances, to renew some old ones. I was asked as a favor to take a friend's wife to that ball, and there I saw you, and was won against my will to



like you. You looked so *happy*, so radiant with innocent pleasure. I felt as if a sunbeam had got into the room, and as if even I must catch a ray of it if I could but get near you, and make you speak to me. You know the rest, don't you, Katie? How your innocent sympathy soothed me, your frankness and gayety cheered me despite myself. There *could* be no deceit in a girl who spoke out every thought as it came uppermost, no secrets in a life which had grown up in a sheltered English home for only nineteen years; and sometimes, when the thought came to me that you might—that you did care for me a little bit, you can't tell how strong was the temptation to tell you all my sad story, and ask you if, in spite of it, you could give yourself to me for my own. It was the selfishness of the thing stayed me. To ask you, so young, and bright, and pretty! Aren't you indignant with me for giving way now, and asking you for your fresh young life in exchange for the battered remains of mine? Tell me the truth, my darling—I don't think you could tell me anything else; it isn't in you—but speak out fearlessly. Don't hide your face, Katie, or be afraid of hurting my feelings. I shall not feel one whit the less tenderly to you, whatever you may say. Answer me"—putting one arm gently round her, and drawing her to his side, that he might better see her face.

It was a very pale little face—a very sober one. Dallas felt conscience-stricken when he saw how entirely the girlish light-heartedness had died out of it under his passionate rain of words.

"My love," he cried, remorsefully, "how sad you look! Forgive me. I never ought to have asked you; only I thought—"

"You thought I loved you," said Kate. Her forehead was drawn into two very grave little lines. Her small hands clasped each other tightly; and yet there was no thought of wounded pride in her heart, no resentment at the contrast between the greatness of the gift he was asking, the little he had to offer; no recollection of the far greater love which ought to have been poured out at her feet by the man who expected to receive the first fresh fount of hers. Kate was too utterly unselfish where she loved to think of how much or how little she was going to get in exchange for that love. What she thought was, as usual, expressed in what she said.

"You thought I loved you. Would it please you if I did?"

"Please me! It would be such happiness as I could hardly dare to think of."

"You are sure—quite sure"—looking up with serious, childlike earnestness in his face.

"More than sure. My child, don't keep me in suspense. It is I who am so unworthy of you."

"That is not true, so don't say it. No; wait one moment. I am only afraid—"

"What?"

"That when you have got me you will be disappointed because I am not grave and gentle, or—or like a grand white lily."

"Katie, that is cruel. You know how I should value you, the more for your unlikeness to her."

"Then—take me!"—nestling suddenly to him like a little bird—"for I do love you. I love you better than any one in the world. I would rather be with you than with any one in the world. I will try, O so hard to be good and make you happy."

"God bless you, my darling, my bright loving child, and help me to repay you!" he said, folding her tight in his arms, and kissing lips, brow and cheek of the little face resting so trustfully on his breast.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### WHAT COULD THE MATTER BE?

"Do you think Dallas can be ill, mamma? It is such a long time—four days nearly—since we have seen him. But, mamma, what is the matter? You appear to be worried about something—what is it?"

"It is only Dick, my dear. See here, Katie, he wants—"

But Kate had her finger to her lips, and was listening to something else.

"The hall door!" she said, her pretty color coming and going with eager anticipation. "It must be—yes, it is Dallas!" and she was flying off when checked by Lady Margaret's "One moment, Kate dear," and Eve's rebuking "Katie, how terribly demonstrative you are! I am sure Mr. McKenzie would think quite as much of you if you did not go running out to meet him in that way. He admires dignity in women so much."

"Dallas would not like a colder welcome than Dick, and I don't think it undignified to run out to meet him," Kate said, but she

reposed still nevertheless, blushing very much and fidgeting painfully.

How very slowly Dallas was coming upstairs, and how very disagreeable Eve was growing!

Dallas did come up stairs slowly. Even the two ladies who had not troubled their heads with fears lest he should be ill because he had not made his appearance for two or three days, perceived how heavily his lingering footsteps sounded in contrast to his usual brisk active step, and Lady Margaret had time to say, "I do not think it is Dallas M'Kenzie, after all," and Eve to reply, "But if not, mamma, Thomas would have come up first to announce him," before a shadow darkened the doorway, and Kate sprang forward with an exclamation:

"Dallas! Is anything the matter? O, how ill you are looking!"

He *was* looking ill; not only horribly pale and worn, but with dark rings round his eyes, and an appearance as of threads of gray among the black locks over his temples. It must have been a very serious attack to make such a change in a man within the space of three days; and Lady Margaret, as she held out her hand, spoke words of anxiety and sympathy:

"For you have indeed been ill. Why did you not let us know?" she said, in her genial motherly way, which more than made amends for the cameo brooch put on upside down, and the tumbled ruffles at her wrist. M'Kenzie flushed suddenly.

"Ill? O dear, no! What should make you think so, Lady Margaret?" he said, with a kind of nervous irritation in his usually pleasant-sounding voice, which made Eve glance at him more narrowly.

"You are not going away, Lady Margaret?" he said, "do stay and give me your advice about the library at Weybridge. Stencil says the paper is too pale a tint for light oak, and yet both you and Katie took such a fancy to that suit at Gillot's. What do you think we had better do?"

Lady Margaret sat down at once. What woman, however self-abnegating, can refuse to give her opinion on such a deeply interesting matter as the furniture of her daughter's future home? Katie's mother was "womanly past question." She threw herself eagerly into the discussion, seeking out instances of other libraries, and canvassing the rival merits of light and dark oak, inlaid floor and stained windows, with the

keenest maternal zest, while Kate sat by answering when spoken to, but wondering inwardly whether her mother did not notice how completely Dallas's mind had wandered from the subject he had himself started, or how pale and dreamy his face had grown.

"Let us leave the library unfinished till we come back from abroad," he said, up-setting with a light laugh all the *pros* and *cons* he had called forth. "We shall be sure to pick up things in France and Italy which Katie will like better than West End wares; and I shall give her *carte blanche* for her purchases. There are no debtors' prisons now-a-days, Katie, are there? and at the worst, we can but sell the house and go out to make roads in Canada again. Lady Margaret, what are we putting off this wedding till the end of October for? Here you are, staying in town all through the dullest part of the year, while if we had been married at the beginning of August, you might have got away to the seaside at once, and been as comfortable as possible."

"My dear Dallas! What has made you so impatient to-day?" Lady Margaret said, half rebuking, half flattered; but Katie did not even blush or smile. Her eyes were still fixed on her lover with a look of puzzled distress; and she was relieved when, the next moment, Lady Margaret started up, exclaiming:

"Ten minutes to five! I shall be barely able to catch the post. Dallas, will you spare Katie to me for one moment? It is only something about Dick," and so hurried away. Kate followed more slowly. Indeed, she lingered to say:

"I shall not be five minutes, Dallas. Look at that picture while I am away, and tell me what frame would do best for it."

But he had fallen into a fit of abstraction and neither heard nor answered; and Katie joined her mother with such a very grave little face that Lady Margaret noticed it, and ascribed it to a wrong cause.

"It is cruel to call you away, love, when you haven't seen him for several days," she said, kindly; "but, you see, I can't learn to do without my Kate as quickly as Dallas wishes; and there is no one else I can speak to about Dick. That £150 I had to find to prevent the scandal of a breach of promise case has crippled me terribly; and the wedding—"

"Never mind the wedding, mammy dear," said Kate, cheerfully. "I don't want it

hastened; and as for Dallas—if he says any more about it, I'll have it put off for another year. I don't know what is the matter with him this afternoon, poor fellow! I never saw him so strange before. But as for that money, I'm sure it was well spent in getting poor dear Dick clear of those horrid intriguing women. I can't think how he got into the hands of such vile coarse-minded people. I dare say Dick is sorry for the trouble he has given, and is going to turn over a new leaf."

Lady Margaret shook her head again. It seemed to her that constant appeals for money, and extravagant orders on London shops, were signs, not of his turning over a new leaf in his rustic exile, but of his getting involved in some fresh folly or entanglement. There were more gray hairs in the mother's head now than there had been six months back; and Bernard Clive and Lord Lovegoats had severally said so much to her on her habit of spoiling her firstborn that, after many struggles with herself, she decided not to send the young gentleman the check he so peremptorily demanded, but to inquire for what it was wanted. It was Kate, however, who must put this decision into words. The mother could not nerve herself to that effort; and accordingly her daughter was obliged (much *contre cœur*) to sit down and write a note to her brother, informing him that his wishes could not be complied with for reasons dictated by Lady Margaret.

Dallas had been left nearly half-an-hour alone when his betrothed returned to him; and she came into the room quickly, and with some little noise and bustle, feeling compunctious for her long absence, which had seemed but a few minutes to her while her mind was occupied with her brother, and anxious lest Mr. McKenzie might be affronted at it. She had already found out that he was of a somewhat exacting, if not jealous, disposition, and liked to enjoy an entire monopoly of his belongings.

He was not fidgeting about the room, however, as she expected, or brimming over with tender reproaches for her neglect. On the contrary, he did not even seem to hear her entrance; for he was standing at one of the further windows, gazing at something which he held in his hands.

"Dallas! What is it? O, you must be ill. Do tell me what is the matter."

Her voice startled him, and he turned

round not smiling, but with an almost fierce gesture of command.

"Where did you get *this*?" he asked, and his voice was so low and hoarse, it did not sound like his own—"this," striking an unframed canvas which he held in the other hand. "Who left it here? Who did it? For pity's sake, Kate, answer; and don't stand looking at me so. Where did you get it?"

But Kate could only stand and stare in blank amazement. Was Dallas mad? or was this fierce incoherent man her lover at all? For what could there be to agitate him so dreadfully in the sketch which the invalid artist had given her at Combe Regis?

## CHAPTER XXX.

### IN TWO CHAPTERS.

*L'homme propose*—No; however suitable a quotation for the present moment, and however impossible to find an equal or better one, I will not reproduce that stalest and most hackneyed of all sayings; but will rather leave my sentence unsounded, and proceed at once to an incident which took place some few days after the discussion at the Bellevues'.

Dallas had been with Kate and her second sister to pay some calls at South Kensington, and about three minutes' walk from the museum therein situated. The great, red, conglomerate-looking pile was just in front of them as they came out of the house, and Kate at once recollected that some new pictures had been bequeathed to the galleries by a lately defunct art-collector, which she had not seen.

"Let us go in for a few minutes, Dallas," she said; "I should like to see them as we are so near—that is, unless you've anything else to do." And Dallas, only too ready to gratify any of her little fancies, agreed on the instant, declaring he should like nothing better.

They walked slowly through the well-lit and warmed galleries, stopping now and then to glance at old favorites, and shudder at old horrors in the way of "pot-boilers" and "signboards," and attracting as much notice from other loiterers as generally falls to the share of two pretty girls in very opposite styles of beauty, in company with a man rather remarkably handsome and foreign-looking. Kate, with her dark laugh-

ing eyes, rich coloring and *riante* expression, had, as usual, most admirers; but Eve—now quite as tall as her sister, slender as a willow, and with her transparent skin and flaxen braids rendered doubly effective by their setting; dark broad-brimmed felt and shady plumes—had her own share; and even Dallas said, laughing:

"I ought to be a proud man to-day. My fair companions draw all eyes from the pictures."

"Not *all*," said Eve, with a quiet smile, and a half-imperceptible gesture.

They were just entering one of the smallest rooms, in which there were not more than half-a-dozen people; and these half-a-dozen never turned an eye on the newcomers, being occupied in watching, as near as was consistent with (British) civility, the performances of a lady artist who, seated on a low campstool, was sketching a copy on wood from one of the pictures.

"My! aint she a stunnin' handsome creature?" "An' aint she doin' it spicky?" were comments they heard from two of the junior male gapers. Kate whispered laughingly to her lover:

"Dallas, I know you're longing to go and look at her. Do it at my desire, and tell me if she's copying my pet in the corner. Eve and I will wait here."

Dallas nodded at once, not because he

was longing to do so, but because pleasuring his lady-love was his *haut devoir* at the present moment. As he came behind the artist, however, Kate, who had a little shifted her position, caught sight of the latter's profile over an intervening shoulder, and exclaimed in her own quick impulsive voice:

"Why, it's—it's Mrs. Clewer! O how strange!"

She spoke rather loudly, and the lady in question heard and turned round, half rising from her seat; Dallas was just behind her, and the movement brought them face to face. What change came over his the sisters did not see. That which they did see was the deadly, terror-stricken whiteness which overcast hers, the shiver which shook her whole body like a leaf in a gale of wind. There was a dead silence for one moment—then, the tall figure swayed heavily back—there came a crashing fall, a hoarse passionate cry—"Averill! Averill! My love!"—and Dallas had thrust back the people crowding round, and lifted her from the ground, holding her face against his breast with one arm, while he warned off assistance from outsiders with the other.

"Did you hear what he called her?" said Eve, very low. "Kate, we had better go away. O Kate! pull down your veil, and come away with me. It will be better so."

[CONCLUDED IN NEXT NUMBER.]

## A PRETTY YOUNG LADY.

### A TALE OF HOME LIFE.

BY THEO. GIFF.

[CONCLUDED.]

#### CHAPTER XXXI.

##### "THAT OTHER WOMAN."

ALL idea of Kate, all remembrance of the people round, was banished from Dallas then; and yet he was dreamily aware, first, that the latter were dispersing in obedience to some order, and then that two women were beside him—an attendant from the waiting-room, and a motherly-looking old body who proffered salts and recommended that he should carry "the poor lady out of the smell of the paint." Dallas obeyed mechanically, and between them they carried her down stairs and laid her on a bench in one of the long cool corridors, which happened to be otherwise untenanted at the moment. And then it was, as gently and slowly he laid the head, once so dear, upon a pillow hastily improvised out of the attendant's shawl, that his presence of mind came back to him—as the eyelids, a moment back pressed down so heavily upon the white cheek that Death himself might have laid his eternal seal on them, were slowly and painfully lifted, and the blue eyes rested on him with a faint, troubled, flickering smile, as though the soul behind were but half awake, as the pale lips parted with a murmur of his name, that, sharp and keen as a knife piercing to his very heart, came back to Dallas McKenzie the full remembrance of all that had been in the past, and all that was in the present. He tried to speak to her, but there was a sort of choking sob in his throat which prevented him from uttering a word; and it was the attendant who said:

"She's coming to, sir, nicely now," and held a glass of water to Averil's lips, sprinkling a few drops over her face, and fanning her, with womanly words of comfort and encouragement. They were hardly needed. The first cold drops seemed to revive Mrs. Grey's scattered senses, and she sat upright, trembling and white as death; but resolutely struggling for composure, and as resolutely averting her eyes from the man who stood at a little distance, gazing,

with tight-clasped hands and haggard brow, down on her!

"There now, m'm, you're getting better, aren't you, dear? That's right then," said the waiting-woman, kindly, and tying on the poor woman's bonnet with brisk tidy hands.

"Ay, get her a glass of wine," put in the motherly body, smoothing down Averil's golden hair with a broad fat hand, in a dog-skin glove. "That'll put a little life in her, pore dear. I must be going back to my children above there; and if you'll take my advice, sir, you'll get the lady, as seems to be a friend of yours, into a cab as soon as possible, an' see her 'ome. They do say that dratted paint's the un'olesomest thing possible."

She trotted away as she spoke; and thus it chanced that for one moment the man and woman so sadly parted; so strangely met, were alone. Then Dallas spoke.

"I thought you were dead," he said, hoarsely. "Averil, Averil, how is it I find you here, and *thus*? For heaven's sake, speak to me."

"What do you want me to say?" she asked, squeezing her fingers together with a desperate effort to repress the shiver which swept over her whole frame at the sound of his voice. "I am dead—to you. Have you forgotten?"

"I have forgotten nothing," he answered, bitterly; "least of all, how I loved you, and how—"

She stood up. Pale and weak as she was, there was a mingled terror and resolution in her face, which made her strong enough to stand. Her voice, low though it might be, sounded wonderfully steady.

"Do not say any more. I had prayed we might never meet again. God has not granted my request. Don't make me rebel against his will. Good-by."

"Good-by!" he echoed. "Do you mean to say that after all that has passed, after only now finding you—you whom I believed dead—you would coldly send me away from you without one word of explanation or—"

"It is because of all that has passed that

I send you away," she interrupted, the same look of resolution always on her face, her eyes always turned from him. "Of all people living in this world, there is no man and woman have more cause to avoid one another than you and I. If I had not been so weak just now, you—" For the first time her voice faltered and broke. For the first time the color rose in her cheek. "Dallas," she added, with sudden pathetic earnestness, "don't let us prolong this meeting, or add more sorrow to what has gone before. Nothing has altered; nothing has changed. Remember *how* we parted. I have done you enough injury, I grant it. Forgive me, and let me go."

"Forgive you!" he repeated, passionately. "Do you think I have waited five years to do *that*? O Averil! why didn't you say 'forgive me' then? Why didn't you speak one word of gentleness or excuse? Did you think I meant all I said in my rage? Didn't you know—"

He broke off, for the woman had come back with the wine, and further speech was impossible. Averil took it and drank it with the gratefulness of one who knew her strength needed such support, saying some words of thanks at the same time in her own gracious manner, which always seemed to give them additional value. Dallas stood by, the while, torn and quivering with conflicting emotions, and wondering at her composure—wondering that she *could* bend her head to him so gravely, and from him so determinately, when she had finished with the woman. She had gone some steps from him before he was at her side again.

"You will let me go home with you, at least?" he said, low and earnestly. "I do not ask to go in. Perhaps for more reasons than even you know of it would be better not—better for me, at least." And he laughed bitterly. "You seem to take things coolly enough; but I *must* speak to you and ask—"

"You must not speak to me, nor I answer," she broke in, firmly, but hurrying on with a swift unsteady step. "There has been wrong enough done already. I am not going to add to it."

"Who did the wrong?" he retorted. "Not I?"

"No," she said, gently, a wonderfully sweet smile lighting up her face, "not you, Dallas. Thank God for it, not you. O, be glad of that, and do not begin it now."

They had passed through the narrow covered entrance-way, and gained the open air. The setting sun was gilding the roof of the Exhibition opposite, and reddening all the western sky. The dome of the Albert Hall stood up like a huge dark globe against the ruby-tinted clouds. A long stream of carriages were filtering in and out of the Park gates at the top of the hill, and the cool breeze blew refreshingly on M'-Kenzie's heated brow. All of a sudden he started.

"Good gracious!" he exclaimed, "what has become—"

His color changed, and he laid his hand on Averil's to stay her.

"I must go back," he said; "I had forgotten. I—but stay while I get you a cab. You are not fit to walk, and—What do you want?"

He had turned irritably to a small boy, who was trying to attract his attention, and the little urchin looked up, breathing hard, as if in haste.

"O please, sir," he panted, "I runned arter you with this. The young lady telled me to give it to you, but I couldn't find you nohow in the gallery."

The young lady! Only a moment before had Dallas remembered Kate. His confusion and discomposure were even evident to Mrs. Grey; and they increased as he read the pencilled line within the little note handed him:

"Only to tell you that a cab will be waiting at the south door. I thought I should be most useful in going to fetch one. Don't be angry with me for not waiting. I am obliged to take Eve home. K."

"Thank God she didn't stay! Thank God that she suspects nothing," he said to himself.

And then he turned to Mrs. Grey. For the first time she was looking at him, closely, as if to read what was passing in his mind, and before that searching glance his eyes fell, and the red blood rushed into his face.

"A cab is waiting for you round the corner," he said, hurriedly. "Take my arm, and let me lead you to it."

"A cab—for *me*!" she repeated, wonderingly.

"Yes"—but he still spoke in quick nervous tones—"a—a friend who was with

me, and saw you faint, went for it. Will you come?"

Once again Mrs. Grey looked at him, half comprehending this time the cause of his embarrassment.

"Averil, let me go with you to your door."

"No," she said, quietly. "Thank you, but good-by. We shall not meet again; and—and, Dallas, I think I understand. I remember now, I heard her voice, and I am very glad."

"Averil," he pleaded, in an agony, "you are wrong. You *don't* understand. For mercy's sake, give me your address, at least. I must write to you."

The tears were standing in both their eyes, but she shook her head, and only clasped her hands the tighter when he strove to take one in his own.

"It is better not," she said. "It would do no good, and you will own it when you are alone. Good-by."

## CHAPTER XXXII.

"THEN TRUST ME ALL IN ALL, OR NOT AT ALL."

A WARM sunshiny day; the air moist, with no more wind than the breathing of a sleeping infant; the sky very purely blue in the zenith, but fading into a faint golden haze, which seemed to rise from the horizon and wrap it round with a dreamy glory, like the halo which encircles the memory of the dead. A day such as we only get in autumn, when the glory of the lost summer, Nature's best-loved child, still clings about its mother's heart, and gives a tender and serene sadness to the face of earth and sky. In the square, tall dahlias, amber, black and crimson; sunflowers, rank and greedy; and China asters of every hue, making bright the shady beds. Little Dotie, a brighter flower than any growing, playing croquet on a patch of gold-green grass, with three other wavy-locked, short-skirted little damsels. Kate, buttoned up in a cloth jacket, and with a book in her hand, pacing up and down one of the shady walks, her slim young figure now hidden and now revealed by the trunks of the trees, which every now and then sent a crimson leaf fluttering down upon her head from the many-tinted foliage above, or suffered a stray golden beam from the sunny sky be-

yond to bring out the warm tints in her hair, and throw a brightness over her sober little face.

A very sober face to-day, and strangely unlike the one which Kate was wont to present to the sunshine, and yet not so much sad as troubled and perplexed. A new thing that, for Kate, also; prompt decision, as often wrong as right, and seldom giving her time to indulge in uncertainty, being rather a characteristic of Miss Bellew's impulsive disposition. Her face seemed to have grown older too in the night—the round wide-opened eyes shaded by a half frown, and the full lips compressed, so as to give a different expression to her face.

She had not even turned the pages of the book which, loosely grasped in one hand, served more for an excuse for her lonely walk than for any amusement therein; but now, as a tall hat showed suddenly over the shrubs that skirted the railings, and a hand was heard fumbling with the lock of the gate behind her, her head did bend in sudden newly-awakened interest over the page for a moment. The next, as if in native hatred of pretences, the volume was sharply closed, and turning round, Kate shifted it into the other hand, that she might open the gate for Dallas M'Kenzie. He had put his hand over to turn the key for himself, but his fingers seemed to have a sort of nervous quiver in them, and his face was pale and lined.

"How did you find me out?" said Katie. "Have you been to the house?"

She looked him full in the face with a pleasant smile of greeting, but, with the book in one hand and the gate in the other, it was not easy to offer the new-comer anything to shake, and he did not seem to expect it.

"Yes," he said, shutting the gate for her, and then turning to walk at her side, "I went to the door, but they—the servant told me you were in the square, so I didn't go in."

"I am glad you didn't," said Kate, "for mamma has one of her headaches, and you would only have seen Eve. But wont you come in now?"

"Not unless you were going to do so. I couldn't come yesterday evening—that is, I knew of course that you were going out, and when I got away it was so much later than I thought, that I was afraid I should only interrupt your dressing. I was so

vexed that you went home alone, Kate."

"I was afraid that it looked rather unfeeling," said Kate, whose cheeks had grown very red, "but it was not my fault. Eve is not strong, you know, and she wanted to get back so much that I had no choice. Mamma would never have forgiven me if I had let her go alone. And I sent a woman to relieve you. You got my note, didn't you? Indeed I wanted to stay."

"Your note? O yes! You were most kind and thoughtful. It was on your account only that I was vexed—lest you might think me inattentive, I mean," M'Kenzie explained, hardly knowing whether to be relieved or embarrassed that things had taken the turn of Katie's apologizing to him. Her face, as she answered, did not enlighten him.

"Inattentive! I could not think you that when you were attending to a poor woman who fainted. I knew the only thing for her was to carry her out of the smell of the paint, and those crowding people, and you were the only person to do it."

"Yes," he said, eagerly, "a woman would not have been strong enough, and it would have been too brutal to have left her there. I knew you would see that, and— and not be vexed with me."

"Did she come to soon?" asked Kate, rather coolly.

"No—at least, it seemed a long time."

"You saw her home, I suppose. Did she tell you she knew me?"

"No! Do you know her, Katie? How, in the name of wonder? But I did not see her home; she would not have allowed me, even if I had wished it. I don't even know her address. You believe me, Kate, don't you?"

"Believe you? Of course," said Kate, composedly. "It would be rather funny if you and I didn't believe one another, wouldn't it? But I'll tell you how I know her. I met her at the seaside. She was lodging at a farm, and I went to see her because she was an artist, and ill. Bee Vanborough said it was wrong, but I didn't think about it at the time. She told me her name was Mrs. Clewer, and she went away suddenly one day, leaving me that picture I showed you, and which—you know"—breaking off in her sentence, with a quick look in his face—"I heard afterwards that she had been a companion of Lady Vanborough's. There she called

herself 'Mrs. Grey.' Mr. Olive got her the situation."

"Clive! Clive, did you say? Nonsense! It couldn't be. Where can he have met her?" Dallas broke in with great agitation, which sobered down into a flush of shame before the wondering look in Kate's eyes.

"You had better ask him," she said, with a good deal of quiet dignity. "I have told you all I know of my own self. If you want to know more, you must go to Lady Vanborough or Mr. Clive."

And, having made her explanation, Kate turned as if to go into the house. M'Kenzie laid his hand on her arm, checking her, a look of real distress and contrition on his face.

"Katie, my dearest, don't speak to me in that tone. Sit down on this bench a moment. Indeed, I am not to blame in the way you think. Only sit down, and let me tell you."

"I don't think anything yet," said Kate, sitting down with most unaffected readiness to hear. "I don't want to think till you have told me."

"That is all very well," said M'Kenzie, taking one chilly hand in his, and stooping to see into her face, "but do you mean that you and your sister have not been already blaming and condemning me for yesterday's occurrence; and all the more from my not being able to come at once and explain it to you? I know women better than that."

"I don't see why we need trouble about my sister," said Kate, with a keen sense of how she had been made to suffer from Eve's insinuations and pity, and how hard a fight she had had in persuading that young lady to keep both for the innocent victim only till the culprit should choose to make his explanations. "As to my blaming you, Dallas—but I should have thought you knew how I love you well enough to trust me for that."

"Do you love me well enough to trust me, Katie?"

"I should not be engaged to you if I didn't," she answered, with tears in her eyes.

"Yet you did not this moment. I don't think you do now—quite."

"I try," she said, brokenly. Then, with a great effort at generosity, "I will, Dallas. You need not tell me unless you like. Indeed I trust you!"



"My own dear little girl!" he said, with real fondness, drawing her closer to him, and lifting her hand to his lips. "My love! If I only were worthy of you!" Then feeling her shrink ever so little, in involuntary remembrance of the word "love" she had heard him use to another woman yesterday, he added, hurriedly:

"Kate, I had a great shock yesterday; I could not come to you till I had got over it. Cannot you guess who that lady was who fainted in the Picture Gallery—fainted at the sight of me? Don't let us use any disguises about it; there need be none with you."

Slowly, but quite decidedly, Kate shook her head. She still held herself rather away from her lover, and her face had grown very pale. It grew paler yet, and the distance between them increased when he added, huskily:

"Do you remember the story I told you on the terrace at the Gores'? That woman is my—is the girl I married at St. Louis-sur-Eaux—the false wife I thought drowned four years ago in the Hudson."

A dead silence. One or two crumpled yellow leaves rustled waveringly down, first on to Dallas's shoulder, then on to the ground below. A couple of linnets flew pecketting about in the boughs overhead. There was a sound of water dripping, drop by drop, from a trough running round the weedy old summer-house behind them. Nothing more.

"Kate," said Dallas, his voice low and shaken, "wont you speak to me? Have you nothing to say?" He tried to take her hand again, but she almost snatched it from him, and covered her face with it, half sobbing:

"One moment! I will in one moment!—O Dallas!—Do you mean *really*?—Are you sure?"

"I wish I were not!" he answered, bitterly.

"O, don't say that! Dallas, I am so glad, so glad. O, didn't I know—"

"Glad!" he repeated, in almost angry wonder. "I should like to know why!"

"Don't be vexed with me;" and she turned her shining eyes and glowing cheeks to him; "I could only think at first how little other people knew you! I was sure I could trust you, my good noble Dallas—O poor fellow! poor fellow!" as her face suddenly altered. "I know it is terrible for

you! But I couldn't help being glad that you were as good and great as I had always thought you."

"You are a silly child," he said, too sadly for much gratitude. "But I am glad you can trust me. You may. Shall we go into the house now? You will be catching cold sitting out here."

"Not just yet," she said, putting her hand for the first time in his, and looking in his face. "Dallas, you look very ill. This has been a great blow to you?"

He turned away his head with some impatience.

"My dear, if you were a little older, you would understand that without asking."

"You loved her so very much," she persisted, half inquiringly. The cloud on his face deepened; he turned on her sharply:

"So much, that if I had known she was alive and here, I would have stayed in Canada, Mexico, anywhere, at the other side of the world, that I might not run the risk of seeing her face again, when the sight can only bring me the pain I am suffering now! How little you understand such things!"

"I am learning to understand," she said, very simply; but something in her voice, and in the white look which had come over her face, showed Dallas how passionately he had spoken. He tried to apologize; but she stopped him at the first word.

"I think I understand more than you do. This lady—Mrs. Grey, or Clewer—you think very, very wicked; that she deceived you dreadfully. That was the least part of the sin, of course"—a start at this from M'Kenzie, who opened his eyes somewhat—"but still, it was bad enough. Dallas, *I don't think so*. I'm sure there must have been some mistake. O, don't be angry! Remember, I've seen, I've spoken to her. A woman can't be so mistaken in another woman as I should be, if she were the vile—"

He stopped her, not angrily, but authoritatively.

"Hush! Never hint at *that* possibility. If you love me, be silent! It is not even possible, but—"

"If it were?" she suggested, timidly.

"If it were—then for my sake—both our sakes—never think of it, or speak your thought to me. Great heavens! If it were—"

"You would not have asked me to marry you then, would you?" she asked, looking up earnestly into his face.

"Would that have made a live man dead or altered our lives? But it is not so. Child, how can you talk so?"

"Because I think—indeed, dear Dallas," and her lip quivered, but she spoke bravely, "I think I ought to set you free. I think you ought not to go on with this."

"Free!" he repeated, with a sudden blaze of color in his face, such a light in his eyes, that she shrank back, thinking it anger; and he, fearful that he had betrayed himself, and deadly ashamed of the consciousness of what the momentary sound of that word "free" had been to him, hastened to extinguish the thought in half-simulated harshness. "Free! Throw me over, you mean! Is that what you want, Kate? And would you do it too? I thought you, at least, loved me."

"You know I do," said Kate, the tears brimming in her eyes. "I wish you didn't know it so well, for then you could judge better. O Dallas dear! be fair with me! It is different now that you know she is alive; and suppose—"

"Kate, I will not hear that suppose." Do you forget the proofs? *I know*, and only too well."

"But you did not know she was living," Kate persisted, pleading against her own heart, and with a great lump in her throat, which seemed as if it would choke her.

"What difference does that make? Are not five years' sacrifice enough to one woman's wrong-doing? Is my whole life to be made desolate by her memory? I have been fair with you. Kate, I told you the whole miserable story when most men would have hidden it from you. If it did not weigh then against your marrying me, it should not weigh now. Of course if you choose to take offence at my surprise of yesterday—though, as you see, I am here at your side, not even knowing the woman's present name or address—if you *want* your freedom back—"

"Dallas, you know it is not that!" cried poor Kate, in an agony. "You know how I love you, and it is only that I want you to be happy."

"I thought and hoped you were going to make me happy."

"I couldn't if you did not love me," she whispered, turning her head against his shoulder to hide her tears.

"My dearest child, I do love you, the same now as I ever did," he cried, touched

by her innocence and affection, and asking himself what the man would deserve who could break faith with such a childish thing. The leaves were still thick enough on the trees to serve as a screen, and he turned up her face to his, and kissed it twice tenderly. "My darling, can't you trust my love as well as me?" he asked, holding her to him, and trying to smile.

"It is because I do trust you, and know how good you are, that I am afraid that even if you still cared for her—"

"Remember that you are speaking of another man's wife," he said, sternly.

"But he might die—be dead even now. O Dallas!"

"My dear love, were he twenty times dead, his widow could never be my wife. A woman who acted as she did might be forgiven, but not so far. Come, Katie, you don't really want to throw me over, and leave me all alone, as you found me?—you, who are all I have."

"You know I don't, unless it were for your good," she said, the happy smile stealing back, as she leant her head against him.

"My good is bound up in you, so never speak of this again. It was an unfortunate accident, but it could not be helped. Now let neither of us ever mention it again. Promise me, Kate."

"If you—like," she said, hesitatingly, but with an uneasy recollection of that pale sorrowful face, with its calm eyes and noble brow. "Only—Dallas, you said she had no relations, and she looks so ill. Do you think she could be very poor?"

"Hush!" he said, wincing visibly. "That is not for you to trouble about. I have spoken to a lawyer—Mr. Clive. If she is in want, he will relieve her."

"You are very generous," said Kate, worshippingly; "but *Mr. Clive!* It is very strange!"

"Ah! what did you say about him?"

Kate repeated it, and now with Lady Vanborough's suppositions as to the lawyer, too, having lost his heart to this terrible and all-conquering woman. "Not that she believed it," she said, thinking to herself that if he had done so, he had certainly got over it before he came to Combe Regis, unless it could have been pique—not a pleasant idea, that; and yet, if true, might it not account for his brusque, unloverlike manner? Ah! what did it matter, though, Kate thought, while she loved Dallas, and

Dallas loved her? She stole a look at him half timidly, as if expecting to meet his eyes watching her; but they were turned on vacancy, his hands were knotted together, and his brow corrugated, as though in the attempt to solve some weighty question; and Kate felt her heart sink with a sudden unaccountable load of doubt and misgiving.

"Shall we call Dottie, and go into the house?" she said, rising, and the violent start he gave showed how far away from her his mind had gone.

"No, dear, no," he answered, hurriedly. "I can't stay now. Good-by."

And with a hasty pressure of her hand, a forced smile of adieu, he was gone, letting himself out without even a backward glance in answer to Dottie's cry of recognition. Kate stood within the gate, her eyes so blinded by a mist of unshed tears, that she never saw some one crossing the road till a voice said:

"Open the gate, Katie. So you went into the square to have your interview in private! I hope he has explained—My dear Kittie, you're not crying, are you? Do come in! Some one will be sure to see."

And the tall slim blonde looked sharply into her sister's telltale face, while Dallas, who should have been there to answer for himself, was hurrying down the street, repeating to himself:

"Clive got her the situation! *Clive*, the lawyer, who saw us married! Why didn't he tell me! How comes he to know her? I must see him at once, and find out what he does know. She is not beguiling him, and he me! What a blind, mad, besotted fool he must think me, if that be so!"

When Clive came back from court that day, it was to learn that Mr. M'Kenzie had called twice to see him, and had left his card, on which was scrawled an urgent request that he would call that evening at the Canadian's rooms.

Bernard shook his head.

"Not so," he said. "That man will never let me alone if I give in to his folly, and the end will be, Kate sacrificed, and for what? No, no; she loves him, and he shall marry her—if I can keep him to it, that is. Now to go and see Mrs. Grey."

KATE was away from home. Both her hitherto unshaken health and childishly high spirits had given way so completely during the last few weeks, that Lady Margaret had taken advantage of the house requiring doing up, in preparation for the approaching nuptials, to insist on her accepting an invitation for herself and little Dottie from an old friend who lived at Fulham.

Mrs. Clifton Gore, the friend with whom she was now staying, was the wife of a very clever barrister, one of Bernard Clive's most intimate friends. It was at a ball given at their house in the summer that Dallas had proposed, and had been accepted; and Mrs. Gore, who was aware of the circumstance, and was a very sweet and happy young wife herself, had felt an increased and thoroughly womanly interest in both lovers ever since. She invited Mr. M'Kenzie to come as well during the latter part of Kate's visit; and she told the young lady so, with a cordial kiss, when she found her standing, with a very pensive face and one hand tightly clasped in Dottie's, at the corner of the terrace where Dallas had told the story of his first love and his last.

They were all enjoying the late warmth and sunshine one afternoon, Mr. Gore and his brother-in-law smoking their cigars on the terrace, with little Jack and Dottie playing with a litter of Newfoundland puppies near them; and Mrs. Gore sitting just inside the French window, near enough to join in the conversation, and with her baby kicking up its dimpled toes, and crowing with satisfaction, on a cushion at her feet. Kate had been sitting beside her; but Mrs. Gore had sent her into the garden to get some late white roses which grew on a wall near the river walk; and Dallas had followed her.

He was in better spirits to-day than he had been for some time back—made Kate happy by telling her that he had missed her terribly, and teased her so gayly about her obstinacy in persisting in gathering the roses, thorns and all, for herself, instead of letting him do it, that she tossed her pretty head with a saucy smile, and told him that if he must needs be so officious, he could go and get her a pair of garden scissors from the summer-house at the other end of the garden.

He must have been very quick about his errand; for she had barely time to spring up for a cluster of buds, rather too high for her grasp, and to scratch her fingers badly in the effort, when the manly tread was heard again on the gravel behind her; and she turned round laughing, with, "What, back already! Did you make haste that you might see your prediction veri—" and there she stopped abruptly, and blushed scarlet; for the gentleman addressed was not Dallas, but a stranger—a tall, fair young man, painfully consumptive-looking, and with a clerical tie peeping behind the collar of his thick overcoat.

"Mrs. Gore, I presume," he said, lifting his hat, and showing a face strangely suggestive of some one Kate knew, though whom she could not at that moment remember. "I am afraid I am intruding; but I had occasion to call on a guest of yours, Mr. M'Kenzie, on urgent business; and hearing that he was staying here took the liberty of coming down to see him. The servant told me I should find him by the river; or—"

"He was here a moment ago," said Kate, relieving the visitor's evident embarrassment by her pretty easy gracefulness. "I am not Mrs. Gore, only a guest of hers; but he has only gone to get something for me. I will call him if you like."

"O, thank you; but pray don't trouble. I can wait easily," was the courteous answer; and there was something in the voice so much more familiar than the face, that Kate could not help exclaiming:

"Ought not I to know you? I fancy—"

"My brother knows the Gores very well," the visitor broke in. "My name is Clive—Philip Clive. You may have heard him speak of me; but I have only just returned from Canada, and am a stranger here. Indeed if I had not been the bearer of a death-bed commission to Mr. M'Kenzie—"

"From Canada!" repeated Kate. The bright color faded out of her cheeks, leaving them whiter than the roses; and the blossoms fell from her cold nerveless fingers with a low rustle to the ground. She sat down suddenly on the rustic bench beside her, with a feeling as if her knees had suddenly given way, and made a mute gesture that he should do the same.

"Will you wait here?—I—I know your brother," said the poor little girl, forcing a strange wan smile. "He is a great friend

of ours. Yes, I have heard of you too," and a little shiver made the words half inaudible as she thought with *whom* connected. "Your voice is just like his."

"The only likeness between us, I trust," said Philip, haughtily, the hectic spot deepening in his thin face. "I beg your pardon, but the fact is, Bernard and I have hardly a point in common. At this very moment he is behaving in the most extraordinary way, thwarting me in my efforts to right one who has been most cruelly wronged, and actually declining to give me this Mr. M'Kenzie's address—I found it out without him, however—"

"Hush! there he is with Mr. M'Kenzie," said Kate. "They are at the door of the summer-house. Let us go to them."

There was no surprise or agitation in her tone. She spoke very low, almost in a whisper; and if Philip had looked at her he would have been horrified by the change five minutes had wrought. This white-faced woman, with darkly-lined pain-laden eyes, was no more like the brilliant smiling girl he had found among the roses, than if she had been the latter's wraith.

But he had risen to his feet with a look of fierce anger, which swept away all thought of anybody else.

"Bernard here!" he exclaimed, vehemently. "So he has tried to be before me, has he? and perhaps to get M'Kenzie out of the way. 'Because the man is going to be married' forsooth! As if that were any reason he should not take back a calumny which is blighting an innocent life! Excuse me, I must go to them at once. This is a private matter."

"Not from me, I think," said Kate, gently. "You are quite right; but—it is I who was going to marry Mr. M'Kenzie; and I will see that you can speak freely to him. Bernard shall not prevent wrong being righted for—for any one's sake;" and before Philip could recover from his conscience-stricken silence, she had led him along the laurestinus-bordered path to the summer-house, at the door of which the two other men were talking too earnestly to notice their approach, and startled them both by her quiet announcement:

"Dallas, here is Mr. Philip Clive. He wishes to speak to you on a matter of importance."

Dallas turned round, flushing violently.

"Kate!"—then turning angrily to Ber-

nard. "You never told me, sir, that your brother was *here*. Mr. Philip Clive," and he spoke with strongly repressed emotion and bitterness, "I should be glad to see you, but I have just given my word to your brother not to communicate with you on the subject you come about except through him."

"My brother! What has *he* to do with my affairs?" cried Philip; but Bernard checked him, an air of keen disappointment and depression in his tone.

"Nothing. I come too late. Mr. M'Kenzie, I release you from your engagement. Miss Bellew," going up to her with a look of anxious kindly earnestness on his face, "these gentlemen are too intent on their Canadian business to have leisure for you and me. Will you let me take you back to the house? I have a message for you from Miss Eve."

He spoke trying to divert her attention; but Kate put an ice-cold little hand in his without looking at him, and said in the same low strange voice:

"I would rather stay, thank you. I may, Dallas, may I not? This concerns me as much as you; and it is better we should both hear it from Mr. Philip Clive at the same time."

She did not wait for an answer, but led the way into the summer-house, and sat down. Dallas seemed too irresolute and agitated to reply. He had lost his nerve in the unexpected conjunction of events and people; and Philip's eager determination to speak in contrast to Kate's emotionless quiet, seemed to bewilder him. He looked at her as if about to dissent; but then his eyes went back to Philip, who was drawing a bundle of papers from the pocket of his overcoat; and he too sat down on the other side of the roughly-carved little table in the centre, and folded his arms on it. Bernard leant against the ivy-wreathed pillar with crossed arms and tightened, disapproving lips, and eyes bent on Kate's drooping head.

"I shall not detain you long," Philip said, nervously, fumbling at his papers. "Had I known with whom you were staying—but I promised a dying wretch to finish this duty for him; and as it is a case of foul slander, in which you were made an innocent party—" He stopped to cough, a long hollow convulsive cough, which brought a fresh furrow of concern to Bernard's brow. Dallas looked up quickly.

"What slander have I been a party to?" he asked. "I don't understand you."

"You will in a moment. If I were to read all these," touching the papers before him, "it would take too long; and this cough (though it is nothing, really nothing at all) interrupts me; but I have made a summary of them; and you can stop me if you find occasion. To commence with what concerns yourself: you were married on the 11th of April, 186-, at S. Louis-sur-Eaux, a village in the province of Three Rivers, to Miss Averil Gertrude Ray, a resident of that place."

"Go on," said M'Kenzie, hoarsely. At the first mention of his marriage his eyes wandered to Kate; but she neither moved nor looked up, and they came back to the speaker, and never strayed again. Philip had only paused for breath. He went on reading.

"Half-an-hour after your wedding you received a letter from a Mr. Milbank, informing you that Miss Ray was already married to the writer; that they had been obliged to separate on account of money matters; but that the lady was not only aware of his existence, but had been corresponding with him till within the last few days. This person also enclosed a certificate which he declared—"

"Was it false then?" M'Kenzie broke in with a vehemence which almost shook the little building; "was this man *not* her husband, and I deceived?"

"Deceived!" repeated Philip, in a voice of bitter scorn; "how could *you* be deceived? you who day by day had seen the character of your betrothed open to you as the pages of the Bible—you who, if you did not cast any accusation affecting her honor from you as you would the dirt from your feet, must have sifted it to the very bottom before even offending her ears with it! How could you be deceived, when having, as of course you had, taken this ordinary step, you went to her, and hurled her disgrace in her face, loading her with vituperation and obloquy, and heaping on her every malediction and reproach which a madman (I beg your pardon, a virtuous and injured man!) could find it in his vocabulary to utter—"

"Go on," repeated M'Kenzie, an ominous frown on his brow. "You are a clergyman, I see. Spare sneers which cannot be answered as I would answer them on another

man, and—go on. *Was she married?* “Of course she was,” Philip retorted with the same contemptuous smile, “and to this Milbank. (You’ll find fault with my sneering at him perhaps; I can’t help that. Clergyman or no clergyman, I must.) When Averil was a girl of nineteen, this man—a young fellow then, and an attorney—was employed in unravelling some speculations in which her father was mixed up. Mr. Ray was a weak man, as innocent as a baby, and as ignorant of business. The speculation was a huge swindle; several people were ruined by it. There was a hue and cry for the promoters, and—he was one of them. Milbank had the papers, knew all about it from the first, and had it in his power to show the poor old man as innocent of double-dealing as he really was, or denounce him as the cheat circumstances made him appear. What do you think he did? Went to the house where Mr. Ray was lying ill (the shock and agitation having been too much for him), and offered to clear him and his name for a certain price which, in plain terms, he specified.”

“Averil’s hand! I knew it,” Dallas gasped, huskily.

“*Miss Ray’s hand,*” corrected Philip, a haughty flash in his eyes. “Yes, he asked for that; and it was denied him. He persisted. She told him with her own lips that the only feelings she had for him were the most entire contempt and distrust. Still he persisted; and—well, sir, the father was sick and suffering. He had always liked this Milbank, a handsome plausible fellow, and he prayed and urged his daughter to consent and save him. His wife, a proud delicate woman, dreading scandal and shame more than death, and the idol of her daughter’s heart, pleaded with Averil to the same tune, until—well, you can guess the end—she was driven desperate, and yielded. Mr. Ray’s name appeared among the innocent sufferers instead of the guilty promoters of the bubble; and Averil was married to Milbank in the following week. The old people lost most of their money in the crash, sold their house in Montreal, and migrated to a cottage in the suburbs, where, within only two months of the downfall of the swindle, Mr. Ray died. Averil’s sacrifice had saved her father’s reputation: Averil’s sacrifice had not saved her father’s life. There is little need to go into what followed. Miss Ray had told this Milbank

what were her feelings towards him. She repeated them before going to the altar; and she never changed them. He disbelieved her at first; then he swore to break her pride and punish her; and he married her for that purpose. They lived together for one year, during which (remember, I have all this from his own lips) he lavished on her every insult and injury, down to curses, blows, and worse indignities still. And she bore all uncomplainingly, doing her duty with the silent patience of a martyr, and disdaining her tyrant too much even to reproach him. Finally, having spent all their money, got into debt, and being on the eve of arrest for some piece of roguery too sharp for the law to overlook, he deserted her without even an adieu. An execution was put into their house almost immediately afterwards, the furniture was sold, and she was left penniless and alone in the world.”

Something like a curse broke from Dallas M’Kenzie’s lips, and his right hand clenched convulsively; but Philip went on:

“In this strait Averil did what I suppose most young women so situated would have done—went home to her mother, and lived with her for eighteen months in such peace as health injured by all she had gone through, and a continual dread of her husband’s reappearance, would permit. At the end of that time, however, this dread was laid to rest, and the shadow which hung over their lives lifted forever. They received news of Mr. Milbank’s death.”

“His death!” cried M’Kenzie. “He was dead, then, and she is *my*—But you said you had this from his own lips! For Heaven’s sake go on.”

His face was ashy pale, and his hands quivering with agitation. Bernard looked at Kate, for as the words broke from her lover’s lips, he saw a quick long shiver run from head to heel through her entire frame.

“He was *not* dead, and I had this from his own lips,” said Philip, with a scornful smile, broken by his oft-recurring cough; “but he and a friend of his had got involved in some disgraceful affair which, if discovered, would have transported him for life. The only chance of his escaping was that he should die before the news got wind at head-quarters, and he did die accordingly, and in a most skillful manner. Averil first received a pencilled scrawl from himself, saying that he was dying, and a few days

afterwards a letter from the doctor who had attended him (his friend) telling her of his decease, and enclosing a certificate of the same. He further stated that Milbank had desired his few effects should be sent to his wife, and accordingly these convincing proofs of his decease were duly forwarded to her—a half-worn suit of clothes and some linen marked by herself; a copy of Walt Whitman's poems, stained with tobacco-juice, and with his name inside; a pipe which had been often puffed in her face, and a note-book with a draft on a Montreal bank for twenty dollars in it. Perhaps this last item was the most conclusive evidence of any (had any more been needed), Japhet Milbank never having been known to let a penny out of his clutches that he could hold on to, and the scoundrel was well aware of it. That draft sealed the lie which ruined his wife's life.

"Her future was determined on the same day which saw the announcement of Milbank's death in the Montreal papers." She and her mother gave up their cottage, dismissed the servants (all but the French maid, who had been with them ever since Mrs. Ray's marriage), and travelled north to S. Louis-sur-Eaux, where she resumed her maiden name and her old life. They were very poor, as you know, but to Averil any poverty, so her mother could have been shielded from suffering from it, would have been bliss after all she had gone through; and Mrs. Ray had only one wish left—never to hear the name or to be reminded of the man to whom she had sacrificed her child's life. It was the one slur on her own for which she could never forgive herself; and Averil's own horror of the past urged her to blot out the very memory of it to the utmost. Her marriage was never so much as suspected among the people where they had settled. It was a thing unspoken of, and ignored even between themselves.

"Thus they lived three years—three peaceful quiet years—making few acquaintances, mixing in no society, all in all to each other, and never suspecting that they held a traitor in their midst—a traitor who, but for you, might never have lifted her head to sting. This person was a quadroon woman—you remember her, I see—who came to S. Louis-sur-Eaux shortly after themselves, sought help and employment from them, and was taken into their service as general servant; and she knew not only

of Japhet Milbank's existence and whereabouts, but was paid by him to keep him acquainted with every detail of his wife's life. This woman, who for three years had nothing but a journal of absolute retirement, of matronly reserve, and unflinching kindness to herself to record, was the person who informed him of your arrival in the place within a week of its occurrence; and from that time, through your rapidly-increasing friendship and the mother's illness and death, to your subsequent engagement, was in constant and regular communication with her employer.

"Yes, I am a clergyman," said Philip, with a blaze of indignation in his eyes and voice; "but I can hardly curb my tongue, now, to speak of the devilish malice which could play with its innocent victim as a cat with a mouse, and deal its deathblow when the pure and generous love, which had never for one moment been his, had not only been bestowed on another, but consecrated to the latter by the blessing of the church. With his dying lips the wretch told me:

"She always hated me, and looked down on me, and I was determined to bring her where others should hate and look down on her. The plot was carefully laid and easily carried out—almost too easily, for the blind fool she loved knew so little of her as to be convinced of her baseness at the first sight of my letter, and never from beginning to end suspected that she was more deceived than himself." Yes, Mr. M'Kenzie, you were a useful tool in humbling—"

"Spare me!" broke from M'Kenzie, with a terrible cry—a cry of such sorrow and remorse as thrilled all present. "And she was innocent? She was deceived too? O my Averil—my poor injured love!"

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

### LEFT TO HERSELF.

"I must see Averil."

He was gone as he spoke, glancing at his watch, and muttering something about catching the train, as he sped through the garden by the shortest route.

When Kate left the summer-house, it was with the stunned and dizzy feeling of one who has just received a blow on the head, heavy enough to crush out all consciousness but pain, but not heavy enough even to dull that. She did not hear Clive's

hurried whisper to her lover—it was purposely too low for that; and yet the sense that she had been allowed to go out from the midst of them unheeded and unthought of added a fresh pang to the poignancy of the sorrow she was enduring, a fresh proof to the fact she already felt in her inmost being—that her share in the drama was over, her part in the play played out. The fifth act, where all had to be made right, had no place in the cast for her. She might take her seat among the audience and look on, if she would; but no more: nothing else any more.

So she went slowly on through the garden walks, almost stumbling now and then against the shrubs in her semi-stupefied absorbment, when a hand gently touched her arm, and a voice—Clive's, but wonderfully gentle, too—said:

"Wont you go in by the conservatory, Miss Bellew? Gore and his brother-in-law are smoking to an extent on the terrace, and I know you can't bear tobacco."

He spoke in a low rapid tone, stepping forward after a moment's silence to open the conservatory door for her. Kate had not answered, or seemed to hear, and he thought she was going to pass him without speaking, and was doubtful as to whether he had offended her, or only hurt her more; but on the threshold she paused, lifting a little face as white as a snowflake, and with no light or radiance in the dark eyes, to him, as she said very simply and quietly:

"Thank you. You mean to be kind, I know. Thank you, but don't let him come now. I—I can't talk yet."

And then she was gone—disappeared among the scented shrubs and crimson tropical blossoms which made a southern summer of one corner of the house; and Clive returned to the others with the vision of a tall shadowy face thrown up against a background of green flickering leaves in his mind, with the touch of a cold little hand in his, and a heart aching almost too much for indignation.

Kate did not lie down, or try to sleep, nor did any tears come to relieve her. She sat in her room, with her hands lying limp and white on the lap of her dark dress, and the shawl falling from her shoulders in two straight lines to the ground. The mellow afternoon light reddened into a glorious sunset, all crimsons, and violets, and pale pure greens, dashed and streaked with long

lines of golden fire, which were reflected in the river's breast, and cast strange flickering lights on Kate's colorless face; and then that too faded in sober twilight gray; a cold breeze sprang up from the river, sighing dirgelike among the yellow foliage on the trees, and blowing over the slight young figure which sat there before the open window, still and motionless, with only one feeling in her stunned brain, the first which always comes to a young creature in the newness of a great grief, and says to the soul, like the tolling of a passing bell, "All is over for you! all is over for you for evermore!"

And Dallas never came the whole evening. No comment was made upon his absence by any one, but Mrs. Gore sent Kate to bed early.

He came next day. Bravely as Kate had endeavored to keep up, going to church in the morning had been too much for her; and her hosts had forbidden her attempting it in the afternoon, and insisted that she should lie down in the library and nurse her headache, which by this time was so ragingly bad that she could hardly force a smile in answer to their kindness. And so it happened that about three o'clock, when Mr. Gore and his brother were gone for a walk, and Mrs. Gore, Dottie and little Jack were being dressed for afternoon service, Kate was quite alone when there came a ring at the front door, and almost immediately afterwards the footman announced, "Mr. McKenzie."

Kate had been expecting him from moment to moment all day. She knew he *must* come, sooner or later, and she was not lying down, or trying to rest, but simply waiting for him—waiting, and nothing else. Her back was to the light, so that he could not see the change in her face, and her elbow rested on a little table, on which a volume of George Herbert was lying open; but she was not making even a pretence of reading it, though every now and then one line, which formed the refrain all down the page, caught her eye, and smote with a dull reproachful pain on her heart—

"Was ever grief like mine?"

Dallas came into the room slowly, and with a hesitation which was evidently increased by finding Kate alone. He was very pale, and there were signs of strong agitation and disturbance in his face,



though he came in smiling, and saying that he hoped his hosts had not been offended by his sudden departure on the yesterday. There was something he was obliged to do, and it had not got done in time for him to return to Fulham the same night, or—

"But I hope they will excuse me," he added, with the same constrained smile. "I needn't ask you to do so, Katie. Your kind little heart is too sympathetic to believe I could be intentionally rude or unkind to you. You were not angry with me for going away, were you?"

He had got over it very well, and seemed disposed to let the matter rest there; but as he stooped to kiss his betrothed, she drew back her head quickly, and then, as if to atone for the repulse, put her hand in his and said gently:

"O no! I knew you must have a great deal to think of; and, indeed, I had too. But—I am glad you have come now, Dallas, for you—"

"Of course I have come," he put in, huskily. "I would have come earlier if I could. Did you think I should break my engagement?"

There was a double meaning in the question, and so Kate understood and accepted it. The color rose a little in her pale face, and her lip quivered, but those twenty-four hours of waiting had schooled her to calm and self-restraint, and she answered, gravely:

"No, Dallas, I knew you would not; but I am going away from here early to-morrow. I have written to mamma already, to tell her so, and I thought that what we had to say to each other was best said and finished here, before we part."

"Finished!" repeated M'Kenzie, the blood rushing into his dark face. "I don't understand you, Kate. I have nothing to say except that I am very sorry you would be present during young Olive's visit yesterday, and that, of course, what you heard makes no difference to us."

"Yes, I thought you would say that," said Kate, softly, "but it does make a difference—a great difference, Dallas, for yesterday you and I were engaged to each other, and now we are only friends, friends as we were at Combe Regis—nothing more."

"Do you mean that you give me up? Nonsense, Katie, we have had all that out before. Don't begin it over again. I asked

you to marry me, and I abide by it. Do you think I shall make you a worse husband because *her* name is purified? Try me, that's all! And understand, I know perfectly well that you love me, and I will not *let* you put me away."

"You will have to do so," said Kate, sadly, and shrinking away from the arm which would have drawn her closer. Her very heart seemed breaking, and there were lines of pain round her eyes, but she spoke with a resoluteness quite new to him. "You are true and generous, Dallas, and I am glad, so glad of it; but—you cannot marry me unless I consent, and I will not."

## CHAPTER XXXV.

"RING OUT THE OLD: RING IN THE NEW."

"KATE, there's a letter for you. Make haste!—Mamma is longing for you to open it. It's from Dick."

"Kate, have you got me the book?"

"O Kittie! do come and hear me practise. Tom says, if I'm ready by five, he'll take me out when he comes in from the office."

"Dottie has lost her spelling-book, Kate, so I couldn't teach her for you. I really think you ought to punish her—careless little monkey!"

It was a bright sunny afternoon in May, and Kate stood in the drawing-room doorway of a comfortable medium-sized house north of the Regent's Park. It looked out in front on the green slope of Primrose Hill, with a view of park palings and tall trees if you stood in an angle of the window; and only sufficient glimpses of houses and chimney-pots to give it life: as bright and cheerful a prospect as could well be found in (unfashionable) London; and though the room within was rather small for the large family inhabiting it, and by no means overtidy, it looked both bright and cheerful too; the old furniture from Gresham Square giving it an air of comfort and dignity which more than made amends for the latter being too large for its present quarters, and somewhat more faded and shabby than when we first made its acquaintance. Folding-doors opened into a smaller and more untidy apartment, except the schoolroom, at the back; and out of this Madge and Dottie had rushed, at the sound of Kate's entrance, to join their voices to that of Eve, who was lying on a

sofa in the sunniest corner of the room, with a shawl round her shoulders, and an expression of weariness and petulance settled like a wax mask over her colorless features. Not kindly did Eve take to the reverse of fortunes which Dick's marriage with Fanny, and a fall in certain stocks in which part of Lady Margaret's money was invested, had entailed on the family of the Bellevs. That it should have occurred just now, when she was growing up, and hoping soon to "come out," and be introduced as her sister had been, was an additional injury to her; and her rickety health and uncertain spirits increased the bitterness of the misfortune. The move from Gresham Square to a house just half the rental had been celebrated by her with floods of tears, ending in a silent gloom, which lasted for weeks; and the determination of Lady Margaret to continue Dick's full allowance until he was able to support himself, his wife and twin babies, had caused the young lady such virtuous anger that she actually wrote off to Lord Lovegoats, disclaiming any encouragement on her part of her brother's misdeeds, and begging not to be counted among the refractory ones of the family. Lord Lovegoats answered the epistle, and the mode in which he did so crushed Eve for some time:

"I have received an impertinent letter from a girl who, while abusing her brother, proves herself to be as like him as possible, by her disrespect for her mother, and the meanness of trying to feather her own nest at her family's expense. Let me assure her that, so far as I am concerned, her attempt is useless, and that I trust it may not be repeated. LOVEGOATS."

This note was enclosed to Lady Margaret; and it says much for motherly and sisterly love, that she and Kate kept the secret of it to themselves, and forbore to utter any reproaches when handing it to the conscience-stricken little intriguer; but to admit her to the same confidence as the others was impossible; and Eve's unhappiness was increased by the feeling that she was regarded as a privileged outsider in her own family, and her wants more scrupulously gratified, her coldness and exactions more indulged, because she was not, as it were, one with the rest of the home party.

Three days after the upset of Eve's little *fiasco*, they read an announcement in the

Times that a marriage would shortly take place in high life, between Lord Lovegoats and Miss Clarissa Georgina Montpellier, youngest daughter of Captain Montpellier, R.N. Nobody had ever heard of the young lady before; but the news was speedily verified by a second announcement, of the marriage itself. Society lifted up its hands, and wagged more than a nine days' tongue of wonder, at this union between the worn-out old *roue* of seventy-two with a fresh young girl of sixteen; and poor Lady Margaret nearly broke down altogether at this final destruction of all hopes for her children's future. She would have quite done so but for Kate—Kate, who never flagged or gave in for one moment. That resolution, taken in the little parlor at Llandelno, had been kept both to the spirit and the letter. Although the one who had hitherto been the recipient of most of her uncle's gifts and patronage, she made lighter of their withdrawal than any of the rest; professed to enjoy walking more than riding; declared that, if they had been rolling in wealth, she would not have cared to go to the opera or balls in the year following her unhappy engagement; voluntarily gave up Madame Clarisse for a cheaper and less fashionable dressmaker; enlisted Bernard Clive in her service, and, with his aid, took all the trouble of the house-hunting and moving off her mother's shoulders; and herself insisted that she should take Miss Smith's place in the education of Madge and Dottie, so that George might be sent at once to a good school, and Eve not deprived of her Italian and singing masters. It was a brave undertaking, this last, for Madge was nearly fifteen now, a strong, active, high-spirited girl, hating study, and requiring a good deal of labor and patience from her instructress; but Kate gave both with such hearty goodwill, that Madge fell too much in love with her to be willfully idle, more especially when she knew that the punishment of misconduct really fell on her elder sister's already overburdened shoulders. Lady Margaret, while forgiving Dick, and reducing her own income for his benefit, had refused to receive or see his wife. She "*could not countenance that atrocious girl*," she said; and Dick *would not come where Fanny might not*; so Kate was made the medium of all communication between them, and was the peacemaker who persuaded her brother that it was only just

and natural that their mother should feel indignant at the way in which she had been treated with regard to his marriage; and coaxed Lady Margaret into owning that it was better the young man should not be tempted to leave his work (for he had passed his examination, and received a small provisional appointment in Ireland) for home visits and London distractions; but grew used to domestic duties and the responsibilities he had taken on himself. The birth of the twins and the family misfortunes did seem to have sobered him so far; and Clive, who had run over to Cork to see him in the Easter holidays, reported that Fanny was really a miracle of economy and management; that she spoke warmly of her husband's kindness and affection; and that the latter had a stronger and more manly air than Clive had ever before seen in him. I'm afraid I must confess that Lady Margaret fairly kissed her friend when he brought her this news; for, after all, the firstborn *was* her idol; and both she and Kate strongly suspected that the barrister's "Irish holiday excursion" had been taken wholly and solely to relieve the anxiety which was hanging only too palpably over the harassed mother,

He had taken Tom into his office for the present; for the latter, a spirited lad, very like Kate in face and disposition, had at once given up the prospect of the church on account of the expense his college life would be to the family. He would rather be a clergyman than anything, he said; but he couldn't be that without going to college; and he would rather take a city clerkship than live idly on his mother for a single week. Poor Lady Margaret! The very sound of "city clerkship" for one of her sons made her weep and shiver; but Clive liked the boy's tone, and persuaded him to come into his office for a time, till something permanent could be found for him.

A turmoil of voices in the next room, and the folding-doors were flung open. Eve turned her head sharply, and was about to commence an irritated reproof, when she saw that Kate was among the culprits, and was advancing waving a letter.

"Hurrah, Evy! He's got it. O, aren't you glad?"

"Who is 'he?' and 'got' what? I thought you had brought me my port wine. You have the keys of the sideboard, I think, Kate, or I would not trouble you."

Eve's "gladness" was of a chilling order, and Madge doubled a pantomimic flut and executed a sort of wrathful prance behind Kate's shoulder.

"Don't be over-anxious for your creature comforts, ma'am," the latter answered, shaking off, with a good-humored laugh, her first impulse of vexation. "Your wine is there, poured out and all, in the school-room, so please take it and drink Dick's health; for he has got the appointment he has been trying for—at least he has got the promise of it."

"O, promise!" said Eve, witheringly.

"It will be vacant in six months from now," pursued, Kate, unheeding; "and it's four hundred a year!"

"Then he wont go on taking two hundred and fifty of ours, I suppose? That is a comfort, at least."

"My dear child, you are unreasonable, and forget that Dick is one of us, and as much entitled to a share of what we have as the rest. Papa left everything to mamma for her life, and then to be divided amongst us: two thousand pounds to each of us younger children and the remainder to Dick. He has written of himself offering to give up one hundred a year as soon as he is settled at the cape. I think it is sweet of him, sweet and good! And it is to go to Tom. Dear old patient Tom! I am so glad."

"I really don't see the necessity of being glad at the boys getting everything—*everything!*" said Eve, petulantly; "or why we should live in this vulgar out-of-the-way place, and never go anywhere, that they may have plenty of money to spend. I believe mamma thinks of nothing and no one but Dick, while we who have behaved properly all our lives—"

There was no use in arguing with Eve; and Kate carried off the other girls to their studies in the schoolroom, while up stairs Lady Margaret was weeping over the projected exile of her firstborn, and of the twin grandchildren whom she had never yet seen. It was the best thing that could have happened to Dick. She had lost him, to all intents and purposes, more than a year ago, when he married Fanny Greypole; but this was a reopening of the wound, and the mother's heart bled none the less freely that Dick had written to her also—only a note, but one more loving and contrite than she had ever had from him before.

Some one else was to have a reopening of old wounds before night. When Tom came in he brought Clive with him. They, too, had heard from Dick, and were in such high spirits accordingly, that the clatter of tongues and laughter penetrated to the mother's room up stairs, and brought a smile to her sympathetic lips. By-and-by, Kate came running up with a cup of tea, and a look of loving inquiry in her eyes that won a reassuring kiss from Lady Margaret.

"But I won't go down," she said, in answer to Kate's coaxing. "I don't want the children to see I have been fretting; and I shall be all right again by dinner. Are you not going out?"

"Yes," said Kate. "Tom had promised Madge to go for a run in the Park; and Mr. Clive wants me to go too. He says the may is out everywhere, and the perfume too delicious to be wasted. But I would rather stay if I can help you anyway, mammy dear."

"You are always helping me. Go out and enjoy yourself with the rest."

"Eve won't go. I asked her; but she has a headache."

"Poor child! Send her up to me. I'm afraid I sometimes neglect her," said Lady Margaret, sighing. "I shall have to send you away on a visit, and make a companion of her instead, for a while;" and Kate ran away, laughing at the idea.

It was an exquisite afternoon, one of those which, when they do come in this country, seem more perfect than anything we get in other lands; the air pure and sweet as a mother's kiss, the sky bluer than any turquoise, the grass greener than any emerald, the whole atmosphere filled and panting with the fragrance of white and rose-colored may, which strewed the ground with a light snow of scented blossoms as they passed. Madge the irrepressible, broke off a cluster of pink horse-chestnut blossoms as she dipped under the boughs, for which theft Tom abused her roundly, declaring that he saw a policeman prowling in the vicinity; and making off from her at a pace which obliged her to run after him, the stolen flowers twisted audaciously in the ribbon of her brown hat.

Clive and Kate followed more soberly. The latter's gayety generally died out of her face as soon as she left the hall door; but to-day it looked more thoughtfully grave than usual; and Clive noticed it.

"You are tired," he said, sharply.

"What have you been doing with yourself?"

"Nothing in particular; and I am not tired;" and she looked up smilingly. "I was only thinking—"

"Does thinking make you look sad? You seemed so gay a moment back."

"O, I am always gay at home," said Kate, simply. "They would think everything was going wrong if I were not; so that is of course; but one must have serious things to think of sometimes; and you—we are such old friends now—you don't want me to be always laughing, do you?"

"I don't want you ever to laugh unless you are merry. I should like that to be always."

"And yet you used to scold me for not being graver!"

"I used to do a great many impertinent things. I hoped you had forgotten them."

"I shouldn't like to forget anything you have ever done for us; but I don't remember the impertinence."

"Hum! That is a young lady's speech, to be received, if not believed. Tell me (to change the subject) what serious thing you were thinking of when you looked so sober a while ago."

"I'm afraid you would think me impertinent if I were to tell you."

"You are not afraid of any such thing. Since when did you begin to tell fibs?"

"Since you left off aggravating me into the truth! If you *will* have it, I was wondering why you only read me a bit of Dick's letter to you instead of giving it me to read as you usually do. There!" and Kate blushed up till she paled the rosy-tinted may at the confession. Clive smiled rather peculiarly.

"Do you really want to know? Well, it was simply because he spoke of you in it."

"Of *me*?" looking up wonderingly.

"Why, what about me?"

"Excuse me that—"

"O, I beg your pardon. I only thought that perhaps there was something I could do for him—poor dear boy!—and that he did not like to ask me himself."

"You thought right. That was just it."

"And wont you tell me what it is?"

"No, it would be no use. You couldn't do it under any circumstances. I have heard you say so; and it would only pain you to refuse."

Kate looked troubled. Poor child! she

had had so much pain of late that she had grown cowardly of invoking more. Clive was their truest friend. He knew all their affairs. If she *could* not do this, it was better, as he said, not to tell her of it.

"You know best," she answered, gently. "I don't need to tell you what I would do for him. The difficulty is to know what I would *not* do. But I was troubled about something else—Eve."

"Ah!" said Clive, comprehendingly.

"She is not happy; and I *can't* make her so."

"Nor ever will unless you treat her properly."

"Mr. Clive!" in a very hurt tone.

"Yes, Miss Bellew, unless you leave off waiting on, and sparing and spoiling her as if she were a visitor, instead of treating her as you treat yourself and Madge, as one of the family to bear her burden with the rest, and take her share of the knocks and hard places."

"But we are so much stronger, and don't mind it. You forget how delicate she is. As things are, she feels the change more than any of us."

"She would feel it less if she had more to do for others, and less time to think about herself. You are ruining her as you did Dick, withering up her heart and faculties by giving them nothing but herself to feed on. She feels it herself."

"She does not like doing things," pleaded Kate, meekly.

"She likes still less feeling that everything is done by *you*. What account is she in her own family? None. Who comes to her for help and sympathy? No one. And whose is the fault? Yours, who slave for everybody and are loved by everybody. Of course she is not happy. Should you be in her place?"

"I—don't know," said Kate, doubtfully. "At least I think I do. Mr. Clive, I don't like you. You are like a dose of medicine, very wholesome perhaps, but not nice to swallow. In this case, I think you may be right, but one can't make a change now. I *couldn't* sit idle and make her work; and, besides, you practise the very opposite of your own preaching. You are always working for people yourself. You are making yourself a perfect tutor to Tom at present—giving him up nearly all your evenings. He says so himself, and it is very good of you, but you ought not to do it."

"My dear Miss Bellew, the case is not in point. My evenings are not so lively and sociable—except when I spend them with your family—that I find a companion for them disagreeable. Be quite assured that if I didn't like to have Tom I shouldn't ask him to come. My classics are getting rusty. He rubs them up."

"O, of course! and I am put down and silenced," laughed Kate, not in a very injured tone. I am quite used to that, from you; but—"

She stopped short; and he, looking at her, saw the color fade all at once and utterly out of her face, and her lovely eyes widen with a strange, half wistful, half pathetic expression. They had come into one of the more public parts of the Park, and were just about to cross the road. Tom and Madge were already on the further side; but an open carriage came by at the moment, bowling rapidly along, and the other two drew back. There were two people in it—a well-built, middle-aged, handsome man, and a woman fair as a lily and beautiful as a goddess. Her face was turned from them as she spoke to her companion, and he looked at and noticed nothing but her. The sunlight laughed and flashed on the golden hair which contrasted so wonderfully with her violet velvet and costly laces; on the loving absorption in his eyes; on the magnificent pair of chestnuts which were bearing them onward—laughed and flashed for one moment, and then—carriage and occupants were gone in the distance, and there was only a cloud of dust where they had passed, and Kate trudging through it with a heightened color and very sober lips. Clive's face had altered too, and his voice was hoarse with anger.

"Abominable behaviour! Driving over people in that headlong, harum-scarum manner! Confound it! Good mind to write to the Times."

"Only they didn't drive over *us*," said Kate, soothingly, though her voice was a trifle unsteady. "We should even have had time to cross if we had liked."

A short contemptuous grunt, more expressive than words.

"Do not!" she said, laying her hand with a quick womanly impulse on his arm. "I am content. Why should not others be? You are more concerned for me than I am for myself."

There are times in which a woman's

touch, however light—a woman's voice, however sweet—are too much for man's endurance. This was one of them. He turned on her as sharply as if he had been struck.

"Very likely. I love you better than anything in this world, and you—you don't even think of yourself!"

A dead silence. The sun is sinking lower and lower, a globe of fire behind the furthest fringe of trees in the west. Two long black shadows stretch and creep before two people's feet over the gold-green grass. The children are laughing in the distance. The perfume of the mayflowers fluctuates in little puffs upon the languid breeze. Then a bell rings out from some distant church, and there is a black whirr of rooks from the copse hard by. Kate's eyes are on the grass, on the longest shadow in her path. The crimson glory in the sky is reflected on her cheeks.

"You—you do not mean that," she says at last, very low.

"Don't I?" with curt indignation. "Perhaps not. I thought I generally meant what I said."

"I—I was sure you had got over it—for-gotten it long ago."

"You thought you had given me a sufficiently decided answer to make me do so. So you had. Don't make yourself uneasy. It's the child's own fault if he will go on crying for the moon when he is told it's out of his reach."

Still speaking to the shadow, Kate says, remonstratingly:

"I am not the moon."

"You are to me. O, I know I am an insane fool for speaking to you. I know I never had any chance, and meeting that—that fellow to-day has only reminded me of the absurdity of ever hoping or trying to—"

He breaks off with a quiver of pain in his voice. Kate's eyes fill with slow great drops, which make the tall shadow swim before them.

"You—could not wish to marry a girl who was—was going to be married to another man only seven months ago," she says, brokenly, the scarlet deeper in her down-cast face, "it would not be right for you or—"

"Kate, for pity's sake don't talk to me in that way! It is not your having been going to marry him seven months or seven

days ago. It is that you love him now, and—"

"That is not true"—lifting her head with a sudden flash in her eyes. "I did once—dearly, when I thought he loved me; but now—how can you think it? Have you forgotten that he is married? I am glad that it is so, glad that he is happy, but that is all."

"Are you sure?" Clive asks, earnestly. "Kate, stop one moment and look at me. Do you remember that morning on the beach?"

She does not look at him. She looks at the shadow again and answers:

"Yes."

"You told me that even if he had not existed you could never have liked me, that you would rather be an old maid than marry me or—"

"I did not know you then," Kate breaks in hurriedly, and with woeful shame and contrition. "Mr. Clive, don't be ungenerous! You know how sorry I have been—and when you have been so good to me ever since—I thought you had forgiven!"

"Do you mean," taking her two hands in his, and almost crushing them in his intense earnestness, "that if I were coming to you now—he being put aside as not existing—you—would answer me differently?"

With tearful eyes disobediently fixed on the grass, and pouting lips, Miss Bellew answers in a sob:

"I am not as—as ungrateful as a—hedge-hog!"

"I know you are not. You are painfully—*frightfully* grateful. I almost believe at this moment that you would marry *me* from gratitude; and I—I tell you plainly—I would not accept the sacrifice. I am content, if you will have it so, to be your good friend and a bachelor till death; and never trouble you again, by word or look, for what you can't give; but I wouldn't marry even you unless you loved me."

Tom and Madge are becoming audible in dispute over a wager. Their well-developed voices raised to something above concert-pitch drown an indistinct mumble from a young lady whose right hand (she has succeeded in freeing the left) is gradually getting numb and crushed. Clive only catches a fragment—something about "so soon;" but the change in his hard plain face is like the sunlight of God upon a rugged hillside.

"Katie, child," he says, his voice break-

ing with infinite tenderness, "do you mean you will—*try*?"

Two tall lithe-limbed young people burst through the hawthorn thicket, and career to them with loud-lunged vociferations, as to who was stroke of the L. R. C's boat at Henley this year. Two shadows, which have gradually merged into one, suddenly separate to opposite sides of the path. Clive answers with prompt vivacity:

"Benson, of Gray's Inn, of course. Who else?"

Kate does not answer at all. Perhaps she differs. Her face (what can be seen of it, at least,) has a somewhat vague expression.

"O dear. I was certain it was Mr. Maitland," says Madge, crestfallen. Madge is always certain she is right, and always certain to be wrong; but Bernard Clive is a law from which even she seeks no appeal.

"Why, Katie," she goes on, surveying her sister, "how hot and tired you look! Hadn't we better go home? It must be past six."

"Poor old girl, she does look done!" adds Tom, with a paternal pat on his elder sister's shoulder. "Been on your feet all day,

as usual, I suppose, Kittie. Here, lay hold of my arm. What's the good of a brother?"

But Clive interposes—Clive, who is looking at her anxiously, and making an inward resolve that his wife, if he ever has one, shall not stand on her feet all day, while he can save her.

"Wont you take my arm, Katie?" he says, very quietly. "I think it will help you better at present;" and Katie understands, and turning, lays her pretty fingers on the strong support offered. It is the lightest pressure possible; and yet, O my friends, you who have been young once, and have loved and been loved, can you guess how keen and warm a thrill it sends tingling through two hearts? For pretty Miss Bellow has laid down her arms at last, and her enemy has become at once her conqueror and her slave. Little wonder that the walk home is a very silent one, or that Tom and Madge vote their elders growing frightfully middle-aged and stupid. "But they never did like each other," Madge says. "We oughtn't to have left them to walk together, Tom."

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"ALL FOR LOVE, AND THE WORLD WELL LOST."

BY ADA L. FLETCHER.

"LISTEN!" And the book my sister had been reading, fell to the floor from her up-lifted hand. I paused in my work. It was a peal of merry girlish laughter, ringing through the hall above, and floating down the wide stairway in through the open door, like a chime of golden bells. I never have heard any one laugh as Lettie Churchill did. Like the glad song of an uncaged bird, it seemed as though the spring of joy and happiness that filled her heart ran over at her lips. Even as we listened there was a light springing footstep on the stair, and she stood in the doorway in her floating white dress and coquettish hat on the very back of her head, not in the least shading the white forehead over which the tendrils of shining hair clung caressingly. There was a trace of that merry laugh yet in the smile that dimpled her cheek and danced in the clear gray eyes, and the subject of her mirth she held in her arms—her cat, a venerable dame as old almost as the mischievous girl herself, with a pair of spectacles covering her blinking eyes, and a lace cap drawn over her restless ears.

Staid old folks that we were, we could not refrain from joining in her mirth, which so outraged the dignity of pussy, that she sprang out of the round white arms, and away went both down the steps, out into the old garden, and on into the park as far as our eyes could follow the white-robed figure. There was an anxious look on Mary's face as she took up her book again, for which I could not account, until, with a long drawn sigh, she said:

"That child, Martha! It troubles me to see her so gay and careless, without a single thought of the future."

"Why should it trouble you?" I asked. "It warms my heart to see one of God's creatures enjoying so well the life he has

given her, and I would not for the world throw a shadow over her path. The clouds will come soon enough, Mary. Let her stay in the sunshine as long as possible."

"That is just what troubles me," said my sister. "The clouds are sure to come, and she will be so unprepared for them, that I am afraid she cannot live under them. She has had nothing but sunlight so far—her path has been only over the roses of life. She is such a light-hearted child—so easily swayed and influenced now. How will she bear the storms of life!"

"Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof," I quoted. "The sorrows and troubles that made our girlhood desolate, Mary, may never come to her, and besides, Lettie has more strength of character than you give her credit for. It has never been demonstrated yet, because there has been no need for it, but she has her father's strong will, with all her playfulness."

Mary looked at me in astonishment.

"Why, Martha Eastman! There never was a particle of willfulness about Lettie. Even when she was a baby, I had never even to look crossly at her. She never disobeyed either her father or me in her life."

"Of course she never did," I answered. "She has the warmest, tenderest heart in the world, and she has always loved her father and mother. Naturally, she would do nothing to displease you. But she is easily swayed and influenced by no one else. Among all her associates Lettie is queen."

"I know that," said Mary. "But that does not prove that she has capabilities of enduring trial and sorrow."

"I hope she will never be tested," was my answer. "But when she is I know she will not be found wanting. Her powers are all undeveloped yet, because she has been



kept a child longer than most girls. She is more like a child than a young lady of seventeen."

She came up the walk just then with her father—both white hands clinging to his arm, and her face upturned to his, her cloud of golden-brown hair loosened by her rapid race, and roughened by the summer breeze, falling about the slender form. Albert Churchill was by nature a stern reticent man, and had grown more so, in his strife with the world—a proud ambitious man, but with a hatred or loathing of anything mean or dishonorable, that amounted almost to a mania. The better side of his nature was always turned toward his family, and Lettie could bring a smile to the firm unyielding lips whenever she chose. He was looking down at her now, lovingly and tenderly, but I could not help thinking as I watched them, "Even his love for his only child could not bend that iron will, if she were to disobey him; and were ever that pure sweet face to be clouded by shame, he would cast her from him as he would the lowest of the low." Not that I thought that ever possible, for with her father's determined will Lettie had also inherited his abhorrence of dishonor, and was really troublesome when a child, because of her total disregard of the necessary (?) conventional deceits of society.

They came together into the room, and when the judge seated himself, his daughter very coolly appropriated his knee.

"You are a baby, Lettie," he said, pinching the flushed cheek. "What are we to do with her, Aunt Martha? I found her out in the park almost ready to climb one of the tallest trees after the cat, which was looking gravely down at her. And now here is the young lady perched on her father's knee with her hair all down, her dress soiled and rumpled, and one slipper torn. I am sadly afraid this child of ours will never grow up."

"Do you want me to grow up, sir," she laughed, "or is it not you who makes a baby of me? Would you like for me to be as stately and dignified as Miss Ellen Morris? Answer."

"Miss Ellen is a very good model of a wellbred lady," said the judge.

"Then exit Lettie the baby," and she sprang up with a saucy courtesy, and ran off laughing, taking the stairway two steps at a time.

"She is too wild," said her mother. "But what can we do with her?"

"Time! Time! Mary!" said the judge. "Was there ever a merrier, more mischievous girl than our sister Martha here, when I came courting to Eastman Farm? Look at her now!"

"Trouble had as much to do with that as time, Alfred," said my sister, "and that is just what I dread for Lettie; she has had nothing to prepare her for it, as Martha had."

"If Lettie does right," said her father, "the trouble of poverty that blighted Martha's earlier years, need never come near her. I have not toiled so long and hard for nothing, Mary, and I shall be careful to provide for our child, so that her fortune may be secure in any contingency."

"She may marry," said Mary, briefly.

"I expect she will," he said, with a smile.

"But I do not think it at all probable that she will ever marry against my will. If she does not, of course all that is mine will be hers. If she does, of course the consequences will be on her own head."

Mary's face clouded, and there was silence in the room, broken at last by a slow step on the stair. Looking up, I saw our Lettie slowly descending, attired in a rich trailing silk—glittering with jewelry. Her hair was banded and braided about the little head held proudly erect, and every feature of her face spoke pride and self-possession. She swept into the room with a grace and dignity Miss Morris might have envied her, and seating herself directly opposite her father, began fanning herself with the dainty fan she held, as if it was the greatest exertion imaginable. I could not repress a smile at the metamorphosis, but not even a dimple disturbed the gravity of her face. The judge, paying no attention to the change, asked her to go to the piano. She obeyed, and running her fingers languidly over the keys, asked what she should play. He named a ballad—his favorite—but she shook her head.

"That old fashioned thing! Allow me to give you this from the latest opera," a brilliant showy thing with more sound than soul in it.

All through the remainder of the afternoon she kept up her role of pride and dignity unchangingly. Even toward her mother and myself, she observed a chilling politeness utterly foreign to her nature, but

very much like the lady by whom she was modelling her manner.

At last, as we came out of the supper-room, where she had eaten as if it was a disagreeable duty, and had answered all questions in monosyllables, the judge took her arm and led her to the stairway.

"I will dismiss you now, Miss Churchill," he said. "Will you please tell my daughter Lettie to come down to me? I want her badly."

"Certainly, sir," she said. Then her mischievous face looked over the railing and "Exit, Miss Morris," floated down to us. In half an hour she was among us, again her own laughing careless self. I never heard her father reprove her again for childishness.

Lettie had always been just as I have shown her to you on this evening. Unlike all other girls I ever saw, she never had gloomy hours—commonly called the "blues." I do not think a tear ever dimmed her eye. She was the very embodiment of earthly happiness.

How I prayed that night that God would keep her "in the sunshine" for many years yet to come!

One evening of the next week we were standing on the veranda, watching for the carriage sent to bring the judge from the station. Lettie was resting one hand lightly on my shoulder, and the other was clasped in mine. As the carriage came over the hill, I felt the hand I held quiver like a scared bird, and the other suddenly withdraw itself from my shoulder. Looking up, I found her cheeks a vivid crimson—her eyes still fixed on the advancing carriage. Two gentlemen occupied it—her father and a young man I did not know. Marvelling very much at her discomposure, I released the hand struggling to free itself, and instead of dancing down to meet her father as usual, she ran off up stairs leaving me to meet them alone. The ceremony of introduction was over in a few words. "My sister, Miss Eastman, Mr. Vaughan." Then the question, "Where is Lettie?"—and I went to seek her.

I found her in her own room at the window, very busy indeed with some crochet work, that she usually touched about once a year.

"Why did you run away, Lettie?" I asked. "Did Mr. Vaughan scare you?"

The blood surged up in her face again.

"What a foolish Auntie Mat you are!" she said, kissing me first on one cheek then the other in her light way. "To think I would be afraid of Carroll Vaughan! Why, I have known him always, auntie—Does papa want me very much?"

I never saw her look as charming as she did then, with that flush on her cheek, and the new strange light in her eyes, and I knew as well then as I knew it afterward that Carroll Vaughan was Lettie Churchill's fate.

What a pleasant evening that was, on the moonlit veranda, with Carroll's guitar and the two sweet young voices blending together in the ballads they loved, and Judge Churchill watching them in the shadows with a great content in his face. I went to bed that night with a light heart, for I felt sure our darling's future would be as happy as her past had been. Mary came to my room before she slept to ask me how I liked him.

"He is the orphan son of Alfred's dearest friend," she said. "I don't think anything would please him more than to have the children like each other."

"He is in a fair way to be pleased, then," I said. "If they do not love each other already, I will give up that I don't know anything about love." There was a pleased smile on her face when she kissed me good-night.

Before the summer was over it was apparent to all that the "sweet old story ever new" was being enacted over again before our eyes, and there was a brooding happiness and contentment over the whole house.

Lettie bloomed into royal beauty as the summer went on. The bud fanned by the breath of love was now a perfect rose. We soon grew to love Carroll almost as much as our own darling, and the judge looked at him with fond proud eyes, as he would have looked at his own son had God given him one.

When we went back to the house in town it was understood that we were to have a wedding in November. There was no necessity for waiting. Lettie would be eighteen then, and the judge believed in early marriages. "The only one I know anything about was a happy one," he said, with a look at his wife. Lettie was as frank and candid about her love as she had always been about everything else, making no attempt at concealment, and it would have

been of no avail, for every glance betrayed it. She was unchanged except for the dewy light that softened her mischievous eyes. Carroll was a little graver, a little steadier, just enough to control her wildest whims. He was not rich, but, as the judge said, Lettie was rich enough for both, and Carroll's name and fame had been unstained for centuries. "His father before him was the soul of honor, and he is like his father." There could be no higher praise than that from Alfred Churchill.

Swiftly the months flew on. Carroll was in the judge's office finishing his legal studies, and Lettie was fitting from dress-makers to jewellers, in preparation for the happy event now so near at hand. Nothing ever worried or vexed her. As she used to say, "when the sun shines I do not look at the moles in the air." They were to live at home. There was room enough in the great town house for half a dozen families, and the judge could not give up his one darling. So they were to gain a son instead of losing a daughter.

Through all the joy of the time, Mary, who always looked on the dark side, saw a shadow. "God never meant any one to be as happy as we think Lettie will be, Martha, and I tremble for my darling yet."

At last I got out of all patience with her, and paid no attention to it. She never breathed it to Lettie, or even to her husband.

At length came the eve of the wedding. I never saw a fairer sight than the two in the early bloom of youth, before the golden mist that envelops that time had vanished from about them, plodging their hearts and lives to each other for time and eternity. Lettie was wild with spirits—the very life of the gay fashionable assembly. And there was no nobler, manlier form and face than Carroll's there.

The two weeks that followed were like one long pleasant day. Party and ball followed each other in rapid succession, in honor of the fairest bride and handsomest groom the city had seen for years. Then there came a day that Lettie said she would "rest." She would go nowhere that day or night, but stay at home with mamma and auntie, and not even "think of a ball or party." Carroll said he would spend the day with the judge in his office, and took his blushing little wife in his arms and kissed her before us all.

It was a lovely day. I thought I had never seen the sun shine as brightly in that dreariest month of all the year. Snow covered the ground, and the street outside was merry with sleighbells. Towards evening, Lettie, who had rested all day on the sofa by her mother's side, in her schoolgirl fashion, curled herself up in the deep bay-window, "to see the sleighs," she said, but more, I thought, to watch for the home-coming of the one who had become dearer to her than father or mother. I stood by her a while, then went back to my easy-chair, and for some time there was a pleasant restful stillness in the room. I was thinking how suggestive the scene was. The matronly figure opposite, lifting her head eagerly now and then to listen for the step she has learned to know so well; the slender form in the window, with the fair sweet face of the girl-wife pressed against the pane, looking wistfully out into the fast-gathering darkness, for the one she loves; while I, the lonely old maid, sat between them—no step to listen for, no one to expect this side of heaven. While I mused, there was a heavy step in the hall—a step that did not sound like either Carroll's or the judge's. Neither did the face that presented itself look like Alfred's—so white, so stern, so rigid it was. I caught my breath and clasped my hands, for an awful presentiment of evil overcame me. Mary's face was white as the pillow against which she leaned. Lettie did not see him, so absorbed was she in her watching, and in his rapid glance about the room he did not see her. His voice was husky when he spoke, but the words fell all too plainly on our ears.

"My God, Mary! How am I to tell our child? Carroll Vaughan is in jail for forgery."

Dazed as I was, I sprang toward the window, but stopped amazed. Instead of the fainting girl I expected to find, I saw a white-faced woman, with her soul in her eyes, standing there, silent, motionless. I shall never forget that face while I live. I never should have known it as Lettie's. With a groan the judge sank in a chair, hiding his face with his hands; but she came swiftly toward him, and her voice when she spoke was as clear and steady as I had ever heard it.

"Father," she said, "what was it you said about Carroll? Repeat it, please."

He looked up at her, then, with no trace of agitation in his face except its deathly pallor, "I did not mean to tell you so roughly, Lettie," he said. "But it is just as well. I said Carroll Vaughan was arrested to-day for forgery, and is now in jail."

She swayed as if she would have fallen, but when I started toward her she waved me back, and in an instant was erect again.

"And you believe him guilty, father?"

"There is not the shadow of a chance that he is innocent, Lettie. You know if there was, my daughter, I would not cast him off. He presented a check to-day at the bank, drawn on my partner and myself. The teller thought he noticed something suspicious in the signature. He was arrested, and another similar check found in his possession. He must be guilty."

She turned away then toward the door, still with that strange fixed expression in her face—no sign yet of fainting or faltering. I watched her like one in a dream, but the judge stepped between her and the door.

"Where are you going, Lettie?" he asked, sternly, laying his hand on her shoulder.

"To my husband," she answered, quietly, lifting eyes that were as firm as his own to meet them.

"You shall not go, Lettie," he said. "Carroll Vaughan has disgraced us all; has forfeited his right to his wife's love or his friends' esteem. My daughter shall not follow his downfall."

"Father,"—she spoke still calmly, patiently, but firmly—"Carroll is my husband. My first duty is to him. I pledged myself, in the sight of God and man, to love, honor and obey him though the world should forsake him. I must go to him."

It was a sight to be remembered: father and daughter—two unbending wills meeting each other in a case like that of life or death.

"You shall not go," was the unyielding answer. "Your first duty is to obey your parents."

"If this had happened a month ago," she said, "I should not have dreamed of disobeying you, father; but I remember my vows. I was to 'leave father and mother for his sake, cleaving only unto him.' Let me go."

"Go, then, Lettie," he said, releasing her. "But remember that you make the

choice this hour between your parents and your husband. Your parents, who have cared for you tenderly all your life, and your husband—a forger, a felon. Remember, love, honor, *ease*, on one side; poverty, disgrace, and the loss of your father's love forever, on the other."

It was a hard cruel speech, and the sweet face grew a shade whiter, the lips quivered for an instant, but the voice was as unflinching as ever.

"I love you as dearly as ever, papa." And at the repetition of her childhood's name for him the judge's own lip trembled. "But you see Carroll is my husband. I must go."

He stepped out of her way, but her mother sprang before her, kneeling at her feet in abandonment of grief.

"Lettie, Lettie!" she pleaded. "Lettie, darling! For your mother's sake, obey your father! You cannot do Carroll any good, and I shall die if you leave us this way."

The girl stooped, and putting both arms about her mother's neck, lifted her to her feet.

"I must go, mother," she said, gently. "You have father and auntie. Carroll has no one but me." And she walked steadily past her, without even a farewell glance at her father.

I followed. I could not bear the thought of our darling going out alone into the streets. She did not speak to me when we reached her room, but went about quietly, putting together a few articles of clothing she and Carroll would need. I followed her example, until she noticed what I was doing. Then she said:

"You must not go, auntie. It will only make papa angry with you, and do us no good."

But I was not to be checked.

"I can't let you go alone, Lettie. Your father can only be angry with me—nothing else."

Then, for the first time, I saw tears in my darling's eyes, and she took my hand between hers in a silent pressure, and we went out of the house together. There was no further appeal made to her, and she did not pause for an instant. We took a carriage when we reached the street, and were driven rapidly toward the city prison. Lettie looked up at me with a smile that made my heart ache worse than the stony calmness of her face had done.

"Carroll is innocent, auntie," she said. "Nothing will ever make me believe him guilty."

These were the only words spoken.

Never shall I forget that scene in the prisoner's cell that night. The dingy room, the darkness only made worse by the single lamp, the two standing there in its gloom, and the darker gloom of a tarnished name and life, with their arms about each other, as loving, and tender, and true as they had stood two weeks before at the altar, with the golden vista of life before them. Carroll's lawyer, Mr. Gordon, was with him, and joined him in begging her to go back to her father's roof, until at least the case was proven.

"I am innocent, Lettie," were Carroll's first words, when we entered the cell; and even these were not necessary. One look at his face was sufficient. His explanation was that the judge had given him a check for a certain amount on his wedding eve. He had placed it in a certain drawer of his desk, had taken it out without looking at it, on the morning of that day, and presented it. How the other check came into his possession he did not know. We all believed this, every word, we could not help it; but we knew it would be worthless evidence before a jury without something to corroborate it.

Mr. Gordon, at Lettie's request, procured lodgings for us close to the prison. Lettie was not allowed to be with her husband all the time, but certain hours out of every day she was with him, until the trial came off. I did not leave her for an hour, and I never saw her falter. As the judge had said, her friends all forsook her when she entered the forger's cell; but it did not seem to affect her at all, even if she noticed it. She did not see her father again until the day of the trial, and her mother not at all. She could not be the happy Lettie of old, but when she was with Carroll she was cheerful and hopeful, though there was absolutely nothing to hope for. Mr. Gordon was faithful, but it was a vain fight from the first. Carroll had absolutely no proof but his own word, so the trial could only end one way. On that day, by special permission, we went to Carroll's cell early in the morning. He was utterly cast down.

"What will become of Lettie if I am convicted?" he said. "Your father will never take you back. I know him. It would

have been far better for you, darling, if you had never seen me."

"I would not give our past happiness, darling, she said, quietly, "for a lifetime without you. If they convict you, I shall go with you, to be as near you as possible. Do not trouble about that."

As we expected, the trial ended. Judge Churchill gave his testimony briefly. He had given a check for a certain amount, *not* the amount of the forged check, to Carroll Vaughan on his wedding eve, but had never seen the check in question, nor the one found in the prisoner's possession. He did not look once towards the prisoner's box, where his daughter sat with her husband, though every other eye in the courtroom moistened with tears at the sight, and he left the room as soon as the testimony was given. All the rest amounted to the same thing, and Carroll had only his statement to make. A clear case of circumstantial evidence, the judge said, and the jury brought in their verdict—"Guilty, with extenuating circumstances,"—and the sentence was passed, ten long years in the State prison. Then, indeed, I expected my darling to give way, and tried to make my way to her through the crowd that intervened; but she looked up into her husband's face with a trusting loving smile, that brought tears to every eye that saw it. He was remanded to his cell, and we went back to our lonely rooms. She turned to me as we reached the door.

"Ten years is not a lifetime, auntie," she said; and then, before I could answer, slipped down at my feet, in a swoon so long and deep, I thought the gray eyes would never smile at me again. But she recovered, and never again, through all our trials, gave way beneath them.

When they took her husband away we followed, for I would go with her, in spite of her remonstrances. Once, before we started, I went to see my sister, whom I thought, when I saw her deathly face, would not live through the year; but she did not ask me once to leave our child.

"God will bless you, Martha," she said, "for doing what I cannot do."

The judge refused even to see me, and so we left them. Thank God! I was independent now of all my relations; so, when we reached the city, I took board for my niece and myself in a pleasant part of the town.

But Lettie was independent, too, in her way, and it was not long until she had more music scholars than she could well manage. For my darling had such a winning way about her, and her pale sweet face brought her so many friends, that, despite the well-known fact that every day her patient feet carried her through rain or shine to the prison where she saw her convict husband, it did not seem to lower her in their esteem.

So went by the first five years of the weary time. Lettie was not silent or morose, and I never heard her breathe a word against her father. Only when we saw the notice of her mother's death in a paper some friend kindly sent us, in the first burst of passionate overwhelming grief, she cried:

"He might at least have sent for you, Aunt Martha, and not have let her die alone. I could have borne it better."

And God only knows how my heart was wrung. My only sister—faithful and tender to the last! To die without her sister's arms about her—without her child's last kiss on her lips! Then my heart cried out against the stern hard man who had wrecked his child's life and broken her mother's heart through a blind mistaken pride.

"Only five years now, auntie," said Lettie, that morning, as she put her shawl about her before she started on her daily journey. "Half the time gone, and Carroll and I are so young yet!" And she kissed me with something like her old-time cheeriness, and went away.

"Ah, poor child!" I thought. "When the ten years are out what promise has life for you? What chance has a man after the best ten years of his life have been spent between the walls of a prison?"

But I would not cloud her spirit with a word. And the end was closer than I knew. As I sat in my little parlor alone that day, the servant brought me up a card, so unusual an occurrence, that I was startled. It must be some of Lettie's employers, I thought; but no, the girl said, "The gentleman expressly said Miss Eastman." Then I recovered my wits enough to look at the card, and found a familiar name—H. C. Gordon. In an instant my foolish old heart rose in my mouth, beating so loudly I could not hear my own voice when I told the girl to bring him to my room. What could it mean? I caught the back of a chair for support, as I heard his step in the hall, and the room spun dizzily around with me.

But there was no hesitation about him. He came straight up to me and took my hands.

"Can you bear good news, Miss Martha?" he said.

With that I broke down, and, sinking into a chair, cried like a child, before I would let him go on. When I could listen, he said just what I knew he would say:

"Carroll Vaughan is a freed and innocent man. Listen, and I will tell you now. Edgar Allen, whom you remember as a clerk in Judge Churchill's office five years ago, was shot last week in a drunken fight. Before he died he confessed that he forged the check Carroll is imprisoned for, substituted it for the real check the judge had given his son-in-law, and, to make matters sure, placed another among Carroll's papers. His motive, he said, was to ruin Carroll and enrich himself. The first succeeded, but the latter failed; for he has been afraid ever since to present the true check, and it is now at this minute in my possession, together with the papers for Carroll's release."

I am not a Methodist, and never did believe in shouting, but at that instant a fervent "Glory to God!" rose to my lips, and gave vent to my bursting heart. Our plan was soon made.

"We will go as quickly as possible to the prison," said Mr. Gordon, "and bring Carroll back with us, and have him here to meet his wife when she returns."

"It will kill her," I said.

"Not much," said the lawyer. "If she has lived through these five years of grief, joy will not kill her. Come."

Words cannot describe the scene when Carroll was told what I had heard. He cried like a baby, and his first thought was of "Lettie! Lettie!"

It seemed to us all horses never went as slow as those that carried us back to my boarding-house. And we were not an instant too early. Hardly had we taken our seats, when I heard the step on the stair—not quite so light and musical as it had been, but still our Lettie's step; and as Mr. Gordon and myself stepped behind the window curtain, she came in. With a scream that rings in my ears to this day, she sprang to her husband's arms. Words fail me here, also; and, to tell the truth, I did little else but cry for the next hour. Lettie, too, was all tears now, and even Lawyer Gordon's eyes brimmed over.

There was never a more triumphant exit from prison than Carroll Vaughan's. City and State vied with each other in "regrets," and honor, and his life bade fair to become more successful than it would have been otherwise. But there was a shadow on the frank open brow—a light gone from the clear eyes—which no regrets or honors could ever lift or restore.

The judge still held aloof, thinking, I know, in his haughty loneliness, that, as he had turned against his children when falsely accused, they would refuse to forgive him in their hour of triumph. And for my part, when I thought of the sod that covered my sister's broken heart, when I saw the threads of silver in Carroll's dark hair, and the pale cheek and saddened eyes of my darling, I confess there was no forgiveness in my heart for him.

But they, my children, showed their superior goodness of heart, and of course it

was right and best. When we came back to the city, and heard that the judge was alone and ill, the first place to which Lettie would go was her old home. I let the two go into the room alone, saw Lettie kneel before her father's chair, holding her husband's hand; and then, when he opened his arms, taking them both in a close embrace, his white head bent in a prayer for pardon, I turned away, and went into my sister's deserted room. There peace and forgiveness came to my heart, remembering that my sister loved her husband as well as her child, and that in heaven she knows all. So that I was enabled to give Alfred my hand freely and kindly when we met. The old town house is not dreary now, for though Lettie's voice does not ring through the halls in song or laughter, there are younger voices that do; and in the sunshine of the present we are all trying to forget the shadows of the past.

## AUNT SARAH'S THIMBLE.

BY MARY L. BRANCH.

THREE little girls came to play all the afternoon with Hatty Carroll, and she was so glad to see them she fairly danced up and down for joy. Her mother was away for a week's visit in another town, and Aunt Sarah, who staid at home to take care of Hatty and the rest of the family, although very sweet and very kind, was always so busy and so full of care, that Hatty really began to feel lonesome and deserted.

But when the three little girls came the clouds all changed into bright sunshine. There was Nelly Brooks, who lived on the same street, a few doors away; and Addie Moore, who lived away off at the very end of Main Street; and Jenny Spicer, who lived furthest of all, at the top of the hill just as you went out of the village. They were all Hatty's schoolmates, and very near her age.

"What shall we play, girls?" asked Hatty, the minute their hoods and shawls were all taken off and laid on the sofa.

"Blindman's buff," said Jenny, promptly, and all agreed.

They had a merry time, running about, tumbling over footstools, catching right and left, getting O, so near the stove, and finally, laughing and all tired out, they stopped to rest and to think of some other game. They played "Buz" till they were rested, and then "Genteel Lady," where every time a little girl made a mistake she had to have a lamplighter stuck in her hair. That was great fun, and they played at it till Nelly Brooks's golden curls were stuck so full of white lamplighters that her head looked like a big popcorn ball, and the rest were nearly as bad.

"Now let's play hide something," said Addie. "One can hide whatever it is, and the rest can blind out in the entry."

"Well, what shall we hide?" asked Jenny. "It ought to be some little thing, easy to hide, but easy to see when we find it."

"Here's Aunt Sarah's thimble," said Hatty, taking it from the work-basket on the table. "That's just the thing. You all go out in the entry, and I'll hide it."

They all went out, and Hatty laid the

thimble in the match-box, and put the cover on. Then she called the girls.

"Tell us when we're hot and cold," said Addie, beginning to hunt.

"Cold, cold!" exclaimed Hatty, as one went to the table and another to the secretary.

"Warm, warm!" she called out, as Jenny drew near the mantel.

So the girls all crowded around the mantel, and grew "hotter and hotter," till Nelly "fairly burnt her fingers" by opening the match-box. Then it was her turn to hide the thimble.

It did not take the girls long to find it this time, she put it in such an easy place, under the edge of the hearthrug. But they were more puzzled when Addie did the hiding. Just as they went out in the entry to "blind," Hatty's big Newfoundland dog pushed his way into the sitting-room, to lie by the fire, and Addie tied the thimble down in among his long curly hair. I don't know as the girls ever would have found the thimble, if he had not crossed the room to get out of their way, and the corner that had been "very warm" grew suddenly "freezing." Bright little Jenny Spicer was first to catch at the hint, and she chased good old Leo and found the thimble in a big black curl. Then how the four little girls did laugh!

When Jenny was left alone to hide the thimble, her black eyes sparkled; she had thought of "such a funny splendid place." A pitcher full of ice-water stood on a tray, on a little stand in the corner, and going to it she dropped the silver thimble down into the water, where, of course, it sank to the bottom. Then she called the girls, and stood innocently by the secretary when they came in.

"Where is it? Where is it?" "Are we hot?" "Are we cold?" they all began to exclaim as they rushed in; and were just beginning to find that it was "warm" over by the stand, and were wondering where the thimble *could* be, when Aunt Sarah's voice was heard calling them from the next room.

"Come in here, girls," she said. "I'm just going to break a cocoanut!"



So they all ran, and had such a good time over the cocoanut. They bored a hole in one of the eyes, to let the milk run out, of which each one took a sip, and then Jenny Spicer broke the shell on the back doorstep. Aunt Sarah divided the pieces, and the girls sat down on the floor and ate them. They had hardly finished when Jenny Spicer's uncle came to the door with his double wagon, and said he could take all the girls home, and they had better come at once, for it was beginning to snow.

So they hurried and flew about, and Aunt Sarah pinned the shawls and tied the hoods. Hatty stood at the door to see them off, and they looked back rosy and laughing, through the falling snow, as the wagon rolled away. Then Hatty went into the warm house again.

Aunt Sarah soon had a nice tempting supper ready, the lamps were lit, papa and brothers came home, and the family gathered around the cheerful tea-table. By the time tea was over and cleared away it was seven o'clock, and Aunt Sarah came into the warm pleasant sitting-room, where all the rest were, and drawing her chair up to the table, produced a great pile of clothes which had been awaiting the weekly mending. Then she stirred about all the things in her work-basket.

"Why, where can my thimble be!" she said, in a puzzled voice; "I am sure I left it here."

"O, your thimble!" exclaimed Hatty, laughing; "why, Aunt Sarah, we took it to hide this afternoon, and now where *did* we put it when we got through!"

"Hurry and find it," said Aunt Sarah. "I must get this mending all done to-night."

"I didn't have it last," said Hatty. "It was one of the other girls; and I remember now, it was hidden, and we were looking for it when you called us to break the cocoanut, and after that we didn't play any more. It must be in that same hiding-place now!"

"Well, find it quick," said Aunt Sarah, impatiently.

"Why, I don't know where it is," replied Hatty, with a laugh. "I might look till midnight and never find it, when there's nobody to tell me when I'm hot and cold."

"You needn't laugh," said Aunt Sarah, "for I can't sew a single button on these shirts without my thimble, and they every one of them need buttons, and to-morrow's Sunday. Neither can I mend the boys'

stockings, and neither can I finish your blue jacket that you want to wear to Sunday school to-morrow."

"O dear! O dear!" exclaimed Hatty, roused at last. "I'll tell you what, I'll just run over to Nelly's house and ask her. *Maybe she was the one that hid it*; anyway, maybe she can tell where it is."

"Well," said Aunt Sarah. "Perhaps that is the best way. It has left off snowing and is bright moonlight. She lives so near, it will only take a minute, and Leo can go with you."

So Hatty hurried on her things, and started out, with Leo at her side. She reached Nellie's house in a moment, and went in.

"Why, don't you remember?" said Nellie, when she heard what the trouble was, "Jenny Spicer had just hid the thimble, and we were beginning to look. Nobody but Jenny knows where it is, you'll have to go and ask Jenny."

"It's so far!" mused Hatty, "almost a mile, and up that long hill! But I hate to go home without finding out. And it's as bright as day out of doors, and I'm not a bit afraid with Leo. I'll go!"

"I'll go with you, if mother will let me," said Nellie, who would like nothing better than the merry walk to the Spicers' house, over the snow.

Mrs. Brooks said she might go, it was a safe road, and Leo was as good as a guard of soldiers. So Nellie slipped on her wraps, and away the two went, chatting and laughing along the road. They passed Addie Moore's house as they left Main Street, but did not go in, for of course Addie knew no more about the thimble than they did.

Leo bounded back and forth over the snow, perfectly delighted with the rare treat of an evening ramble, and the little folks made their way at last up the long hill to Mr. Spicer's house. They rapped and Mrs. Spicer came to the door.

"Why, girls!" she exclaimed, "This is too bad! Jenny isn't at home, she went down to Addie Moore's right after supper, to look out her Bible lesson for to-morrow."

"Well, we can go there," said Hatty, undaunted, "It is on our way home, and I only want to see Jenny a minute, just to ask her something."

So the two little girls started on the way back, and had really a good deal of sport over their adventure. They ran almost all

the way down the hill, with Leo bounding beside them, and barking, joyously.

They reached Addie Moore's at last, and were quite out of breath when they rapped at the door.

"I want to see Jenny Spicer," said Hatty, when Tom Moore came to see who was there.

"Jenny Spicer!" exclaimed Tom. "Why, she and Addie went down to your house most two hours ago! Haven't you seen her?"

"There!" said Hatty, excitedly. "They must have gone into our house while I was at *your* house, Nellie, waiting for you to get ready!"

"Jenny jumped up all of a sudden, when she hadn't been here more than a minute," said Tom; "she said she must go right down

to your house to tell you she left the thimble in the pitcher of water, and she was afraid somebody would get choked. So Addie went with her, and they haven't come back."

"In the pitcher of water!" cried Hatty. "Was there *ever* such a girl as Jenny Spicer! Come, Nellie, let's go straight home!"

And back they then walked as fast as they could to Hatty's house, and tired and breathless rushed in. There sat Aunt Sarah, with her thimble on her finger, sewing tranquilly, and the mending was almost done, while by the hot stove stood Addie and Jenny, full of fun, making molasses candy and popping corn. They meant to have a treat ready for the other girls, they said, and so ended the momentous affair of Aunt Sarah's thimble.

## BEAUTY--THE CONQUEROR AND THE CONQUERED.

BY WILLIAM H. BUSHNELL.

"PAUL, you will yet rue your gallantry. Spanish women are no more to be trusted than the men; and when the pure blood has been adulterated and poisoned by contamination with that of the Mexican, it is doubly dangerous and treacherous."

"I have seen nothing yet to fear," replied Paul Thurston, with a proud glance at his new lieutenant's uniform, and a somewhat contemptuous one at his superior officer.

"Very likely, my boy. You are a fresh arrival. But these dark-eyed and dark-haired señoritas are the most arrant flirts and coquettes in the world; vain of their beauty and vain of admiration. Many a gallant young soldier has found them false-hearted to his undoing; and more than one within my three years of service here has lost his life by the hand of some jealous lover, while trying to win a lady's smile."

"That may be true, sir, but I am not foolish enough to recklessly thrust my neck into danger, even for the admiration, to say nothing of love, of any woman, and all the more one belonging to a race of enemies."

"You think so now, my boy, and I hope will unto the end. But still the pastime is a dangerous one at best. And remember

they are not open enemies. It is a stab in the back and in the dark. A dead man is found in the morning, and that is all ever known, if, indeed, he has not been trailed into some out-of-the-way place, never discovered—struck off the roll and reported as 'missing,' or the cayotes have left enough of his body for a decent burial."

The earnest words of General Gray were without any serious effect, as such warnings, under like circumstances, usually are.

Paul Thurston was young, ardent, self-reliant, somewhat arrogant, and his Northern blood had been set bounding from the very first by the beauty, and smiles, and marked attentions of the dark-eyed señoritas with whom he was daily brought into association. That they could be so fair and false as represented he could not believe. Beauty (according to his estimation) could never be so trailed in the dust as to become the willing tool of black-hearted treachery and bloody revenge. His ideal of woman was too lofty for that. Not that he had even the most remote conception of falling in love. It was simply to pass away the tedious hours in a pleasant manner that he

sought the society to which his rank gave him a *carte blanche*.

A gifted musician, he loved to hear the songs, which in the liquid Spanish tongue seemed almost to melt in the mouth—to join in them to the tinkling of a guitar swept by the fairest and most daintily-used fingers—to watch the stolen glances of admiration from behind matchlessly managed fans—in short to play at love in the most fascinating manner and with the most fascinating of the sex, as well as the most skilled in conquering manly hearts.

For a few days a trace of the warning he had received lingered in his mind. Then it was utterly banished. Duty permitting, Paul Thurston gave himself up more than ever to the fascinations of the glorious tropical women, with whom, it could not have been denied, he was a favorite. And each appeared to entirely ignore the fact of the broad line of demarkation between them—that he belonged to a race whom they were striving to conquer. True, he did not war upon women, but the latter were not husband, brother or loverless, and the iron that pierced the soul and the yoke that galled could not but be felt by them as well.

With most of the beauties in the neighborhood Paul had already become acquainted. The introduction was easy—one was scarcely required—and riding or walking he was accustomed to salute gallantly any female he chanced to meet, lifting the gold-banded cap jauntily from his curling auburn locks, smiling a pleasant smile, and giving unrestricted glances of admiration from his speaking hazel eyes.

It was dangerous pastime in any land, but especially so with a people whose name is but the synonym for dark deeds and never-dying hatred. Yet he saw no cause for alarm. Through the broad garden sun and bright silver moonlight he had wandered without molestation—without shot or stab from ambushing chaparral, and believed himself safe—that as actual war was then so far distant the passions of the Mexican heart had sunk into slumber, and any more than ordinary danger became a myth—a shadow to causelessly frighten the timid and bring a mocking smile to the lips of a brave man.

In this mood he was riding slowly along one evening, just outside of the city, when a sudden turning in the tree-shaded road brought him face to face with a girl of the

most wonderful beauty he had ever seen. In an instant his horse was checked, his cap raised, and his lips had given utterance to the enthusiastic but not uncommon greeting:

*"Beso las pica de usted, senora!"*—I kiss your feet, lady.

*"Beso a usted la mano, caballero!"*—I kiss your hand, sir—was the equally polite reply; while at the same time she flashed eyes upon him that swept through all the defences of his heart.

With the grace and ease of cultivation they fell into conversation, Thurston dismounting and walking by her side, and willingly accepting the invitation to enter her home when reached. And soon he became a constant visitor—became more and more enthralled—forgot all of warning, forgot that she was the daughter of an enemy, that the eagle resting amid the cactus and holding in its beak a serpent could never be the friend of the stripes and stars.

He found in the beautiful Spanish girl his ideal. She was fully up to the highest conception of loveliness in her sex—apparently not slow to be wooed—he not tardy in the wooing; and before a month had passed he seemed but to live in her presence—was never happy save when her glorious eyes were beaming upon him.

From a meeting with Thurston she was summoned one evening to the presence of her father, and found as well the one who had been destined to become her husband.

"Inez," said the old man, harshly, "you are wasting precious time with this Northern hireling. What have you gained?"

"His love."

"And, by the cross, that is all. Did you not swear to learn all his secrets—swear by the Virgin? Now listen to me. There is something unusual going on in the camp of our accursed oppressors. You must find out what it is and let me know, ay, and without delay. Then—"

"Leave the rest in my hands," said the dark-browed lover, as he savagely tapped the handle of his sword.

"So be it," replied her father. "And now I leave you to your wooing, senor. Be speedy about it. The times admit of no delay. Inez, listen to his suit, and without coyness, or my curses be upon your head. By Saint Iago! before the convent bells shall sound matins three times you shall be his wife."

He had scarcely left the room and closed the door before she flashed her eyes upon Hugo Alvarady, and fairly hissed in his ears:

"This is your work—yours, to have me play the part of spy upon a guest and then basely murder him."

"What can you care? Is he not your enemy as well as mine?" he retorted.

"He is—is—our guest."

"By the heaven above, I begin to believe you have grown to love the base minion."

"He loves me, and that is enough to make any woman hesitate before giving him to the sword."

"You hesitate to learn from him what might give freedom to our oppressed land."

"I hesitate not—have never hesitated from doing anything that is honorable. But I am not wolf enough to lure a man who trusts me as he does the saints to death, and then feast upon his body."

"By heavens! you love him."

"Your words have no foundation save infamous hate and jealousy. Such a thing as love has never been spoken between us. In the mad hour when I was driven to take the oath of destruction—to lead him by my curse of beauty to betray his flag, I had no knowledge of him."

"But now you know him well," he said, with a sneer.

"Yes," she answered him, very slowly and emphatically. "Yes, I know him to be honorable to the very core of his heart—know him to be pure, and high-minded, and magnanimous, even if an enemy. And mark me well, one who would never strike another in the dark!"

"And loving him, you would save his life."

"Knowing, I would have him granted the rights of civilized warfare and a brave man. He comes here to-morrow night. Go single-handed, meet him openly, challenge and cross swords with him, if you dare!"

"You would pray for his success."

"I would pray for the right."

"No quarter is given to skulking dogs. Remember your oath."

"I would that my tongue had been paralyzed before it was uttered, and my lips turned into stone before they so impiously touched the holy emblem of our religion."

"Enough!" he answered, hoarsely. "In three days you will be my wife. So your

father has sworn. But before that time your Northern lover will be food for buzzards. Yet your father shall know all. Him, at least, you fear."

With the most deadly passions burning upon his face, he left the room; and before she had time to cool her own she was summoned into the dreaded presence of her parent—a man who would have ground a thousand daughters into the dust beneath an iron heel before he would have swerved the breadth of a hair from a fixed purpose.

"What is this I hear, Inez?" he questioned, with every feature of his face tortured with wrath. "Is it—can it be true you love this hireling of a Northern despot?"

"Who asserts such a thing?"

"Hugo."

"And you believe him! Because I can see even in an enemy the traits you have taught me to worship in my own race, is it any reason I should love him?"

"Dare you argue with me, child? Be silent; or, by Saint Iago! I shall be tempted to strike you down at my feet. When comes again this infamous minion of an infamous master?"

"To-morrow."

"It is well. Dread my anger and do my bidding, or better for you that the same plague that swept away your mother had taken you as well. Your lover shall be most welcome to come. But if he ever returns my double curse fall upon Hugo for failing to use his sword as a true son of the Mexic race. Go to your room and remain there. I will take care that you have no opportunity to put your white-livered cur of a lover upon his guard."

With boiling blood, proud, unbending, with as haughty an air and as unflinching eagle glances, Inez swept from the apartment and sought her own. Then a terrible revulsion came. She murmured:

"O my God, and the blessed angels! I sought to win his heart, and have lost my own!" and fell fainting to the floor.

It was very early morning when she returned to consciousness. Scarcely more than the birds were astir. Yet knowing that some of the holy fathers would even then be at their devotions, she wrapped a rebose closely about her, so as to conceal both pallid face and trembling form, stole out, and safely reached the convent walls. In the misty shadows of the chapel she

found a priest, one old in the service, and to whom she had often confessed the slight sins of her life.

"Father, your blessing," she faltered, as she cast herself upon her knees before him.

"My daughter, you have it. But what brought you here so early?"

"Sorrow."

"Sorrow? And you so young and beautiful?"

"Father, is an oath binding that was forced upon you?"

"Never. But it should not be lightly taken—should not be the offspring of hate or any evil passion. It should be thoughtfully, reverently, prayerfully and freely taken."

"But having taken it, driven thereto by force and fear, can you absolve me?"

"Yes. It was not binding, and—"

She was gone before he could utter more—fled, leaving him in astonishment. What oath could have been forced upon her, and why should she wish to be absolved from it? These thoughts came mingled with a face so fair as to disturb him, priest for two score years though he was, even while at his devotions, and he resolved to know all when next they met.

All through the day Inez felt rather than saw that she was watched. The manner of the servants told her this, and when she would have taken her customary ride the beautiful mustang failed to be brought to the door.

May Heaven help any woman, rich or poor, old or young, thus situated! She knew that her lover, even if permitted to see her again, would be most foully and brutally murdered, and she was so surrounded as not to be able to give the slightest warning. And there was no one she could trust, no not one. Her father was all-powerful, and there was not one in the house that did not feel as he did with regard to the young American; not one who would not gladly have placed poison in his cup or driven a dagger into his loving heart.

And he was coming that very night to see her—coming by her own special invitation—coming, as she felt assured, to speak words of love—coming to his death, and she powerless to save! Her thoughts were horrible, became more so as the hours of that long and bitter day slowly faded away and the shadows of evening began to gather.

"By the holy angels! by the spirit of my

sanctified mother!" she exclaimed, through bloodless lips and clenched teeth, as she walked the floor like a caged tigress, "if I could but get out of this house, I would waylay Hugo and drive a dagger deeply into his black heart, before any harm should come to Paul—my Paul!"

The ending was like the wail of a breaking heart. Love conquered passion, as aye it will, and she flung herself upon a couch and wept a tempest of tears.

The entrance of a servant, one who had been the greatest favorite and most in her confidence, aroused her, and she fancied she saw a faint glimmer of light through the blackness of despair.

But all her pleadings and bribes were without avail. The hatred of even the girls of her race for that of her lover was too deadly to be relaxed by the temptations of either respect or avarice. Then, indeed, the arrow was more sharply and surely barbed, and the iron driven deeper into her shuddering soul.

Night came. Would it bring her living lover or his bloody corpse? Would her already reeling brain withstand more of the terrible delay? In the mad agony of the moment she bared her bosom and held a little poniard, with its needle-like point, at her heart. One thrust, and all would be over. It just punctured the flesh, softer than velvet and whiter than the plumage of a swan, and recalled her to herself. The banished blood surged back with the impetuosity of a springtime flood through her icy veins, and crimsoned bosom, face and brow.

"Craven that I am," she said, "to think of such a thing; to even dream of cowardly suicide, when it has been my lifetime boast that the best and purest blood of the race of Montezuma was mine. Die? No! by the shining crowns of the holy angels, I will not die until I have at least been revenged. Father—kindred, I have none. All are banished—all lost. Henceforth the world contains nothing for me but Paul. Then come, all the fire of my warlike race, and nerve my heart and hand! If he who is the monarch of my soul, the lord of my every thought, comes to harm, he who does the deed shall perish by my hand, girl though I am, and then—then death for me as well."

It was a terrible decision for one so young and pure. But the most passionate tropical love was master of all other feelings,

and that, once turned from its course, would give place to equally burning hate.

"The wife of Hugo?" she hissed, with all of a serpent's vengeance, as the thought crowded upon her brain; "never! If I should live long enough to be forced to the altar, the sacred place, and even priestly robes, shall be stained with his blood and mine before he touches lips or hands with his foul and loathsome caresses. Hark! O angel mother, save me from madness!"

The convent bell tolled slowly out the hour of vespers—the hour of the fatal tryst. Her lover should have been there, but was not, and the solid earth seemed to reel beneath her feet, and every star in heaven to be blotted out, when her father entered and said:

"Hugo must have played his part well, though too swiftly. The hour has come, but not your dog lover. His accursed body is food for the vultures. May thus perish all the enemies of the noble Mexic race. Ha! Hugo is coming. I can hear the sound of his horse's feet as he hurries to bring me the good tidings."

Like one turned into stone, Inez stood with her hands clasped upon her wildly throbbing temples. The blood in her veins seemed to have been instantly frozen, and her heart to cease to beat. She, too, heard the sounds of a horse's feet—felt that the murderer of her lover was coming, felt that his bloody corpse was even then lying in the cold thorny chaparral, and yet had no power to move, none even for vengeance. Woman's nature had triumphed over that of the fiend!

Like the winner of a swift race, the coming horse was urged on—paused not until the door was reached. A muffled rider sprang down, burst in regardless of ceremony, threw aside a heavy cloak and stood revealed, with an unsheathed sword in his hand.

"Hugo!" exclaimed the old man in triumph.

"Thank God!" screamed Inez, and fell almost lifeless into the outstretched hands of Paul Thurston!

"In the name of Saint Iago!" continued her father, almost bereft of reason at the appearance of one he fully believed dead—at the sudden turning of the scales, "what does this mean?"

"Simply," replied Thurston, as soon as he saw something of returning life in the

white face of the loved one he was straining to his heart, "that I was ambushed by some unknown assassin. He sprang upon me from cover as I was slowly riding along. But fortunately I was not entirely unprepared. The heavy stirrup received the blow intended for my heart, and a bullet put me out of danger. This was his weapon. You may know the miserable coward by it. But who are you that question? Often as I have visited this house I have never seen you before."

"I am the father of the girl you hold; and may my—"

"Forbear!" broke in a feeble but deep-toned voice; and looking around in astonishment, they saw the old priest, supported by two others, and evidently moving with great pain.

"Curse her, holy father, as I would have done!" shouted the old man, quivering with impotent rage.

"Not so." And the good priest shook his finger with a warning gesture.

"Bless us, father!" And Inez prostrated herself at the feet of the priest, drawing her lover down with her.

"I bless you, and you shall be blessed." And the trembling hands were waved in benediction over them. Then he sank into a chair, and continued, "I see the hand of God in this, and his holy will must be accomplished. Listen"—to the father of Inez. "This morning your daughter came to me for absolution from an impious oath—one forced upon her against all of feeling, and affection, and reason. I granted it without questioning what she asked. Now I know all; and with my life trembling in the balance, bid you beware how you go contrary to the decrees of high heaven."

He paused to renew his scanty breath. A servant hurried and brought a glass of wine, and presently he resumed:

"Hardly had your daughter left me before a muffled man (who must have been listening) came and upbraided and cursed me for what I had done—stuck a dagger deeply into my side, and left me writhing in pain and blood, probably in his belief, dead."

"Horror!" burst alike from the lips of Inez and her father, at the thought of any one even daring to raise a hand against the holy man.

"At first I did not know him, but as I

was falling and he fleeing I caught hold of his cloak to sustain myself, and saw the face of—"

"Hugo!" exclaimed Inez, as if by inspiration.

"Even so, my daughter. But I have just learned that he has already been punished—that this brave young stranger has been the avenger, in the hands of the Lord, and I bless him for it."

"Bless a heretic!" interrupted the father of Inez, in astonishment, and glad to seize upon any pretext to stem the tide that had so suddenly and fearfully turned against him.

"Even so, my son. With life swiftly passing away, many of its false prejudices are fading with it. I see now that there may be good in his religion as well as in ours—that the same Christ may have died for both, that there may be more than one pathway to heaven. God and the holy saints forgive me if I have erred through zeal for the welfare of our ever blessed church. And," he continued, more strongly, and fixing his eyes upon the old Spaniard in a way that made even his rebellious soul shudder—"and I know not certainly if the dead Hugo—may his soul have found mercy in his last extremity—had any part-

ner in the bloody work. If so, may he repent, and at last be saved by the holy blood that stained the cross. My children, give me your hands. What God has joined, let no man dare to put asunder."

His own hands were raised in benediction, and with his old lips breathing the words of prayer he sank back lifeless.

\* \* \* \* \*

Paul Thurston and his lovely bride had neither part nor lot in any of the bloody scenes of war. Far away their honeymoon was passed; and when, a few years later, Inez was called upon to mourn the loss of her father, it was not as one who had died with unchecked passions and without blessed hope.

His death gave them wealth. His tomb and that of the good old priest are often visited, and the marble above attests love and gratitude.

As the husband and wife talked over the scenes and trials of other days, he laid his hand with caressing tenderness upon her shining raven hair and whispered:

"My darling, beauty ever conquers."

Turning up her red lips to meet his kisses, and flashing her glorious eyes fervently upon him, she answers:

"And beauty by love is conquered."



## BEAUTY'S DOINGS.

BY LOUISE DUPEE.

MAMMA and I both had been longing for a country life for some time, and one spring when the birds first commenced to sing in the row of consumptive-looking poplars that lined our city street, our longings became too intense to be resisted, and we decided to seek for a "home in the grove" at once. The newspapers were full of advertisements of charming rustic cottages in lovely rural neighborhoods, where the leaves and birds made music all day, and silver brooks made love to the nodding daisies and buttercups. What vivid imaginations, what poetical souls have the real estate brokers! and how harrowing to such souls the ways of trade must be, the dust and turmoil of the city, the petty arts essential to sharp bargaining! Surely, they ought to pass their peaceful elevated lives among the untrodden paths of their daisied fields and beside the murmuring streams!

We devoted one day to interviewing these poetical men of business, and were completely bewildered by the variety of charming places ready and waiting to be occupied. They were just the places of our imagination, only more beautiful, and rustic, and flowery, and they were all to be sold, or rented under circumstances which would make their prices a mere song. There were stories connected with some of them so pathetic that they drew tears from my eyes. Somebody's dear old home, surrounded by ancestral trees, was to be sacrificed because duty called him at once to pork-packing and Chicago. He hadn't the muscle requisite for holding the plow, and there were seven orphaned mouths to fill; so strangers must gaze at the profile of the familiar hill, hear the bees hum in the ancestral trees, and feed the ancestral chickens, while he suddenly and sadly departed with the seven for the far West. They always go suddenly, and must sell the old homestead at a sacrifice because they *must* sell at once.

We wanted a cottage—a cottage under drooping branches is so romantic—but the dear old home surrounded by ancestral trees sounded very promising, and as our purse wasn't over full, mamma thought the farm

might be turned to account. We might hire some one to superintend it, and such kind of farming is very fashionable. Mamma has a great head for planning. It is really astonishing what skill she has in saving and making the most of money, though papa's family—disagreeable set—shake their heads over her management, and wonder how she has contrived to spend such a great slice out of the fortune papa left her. Did she not have those famous Dorking hens, that we gave three dollars apiece for when we first went into the country, killed, so that we needn't be obliged to buy fresh meat when it was so expensive? They were such cunning little pets, too, it almost broke her heart.

We went immediately to see this dear old home, but did not find it all that fancy painted in some respects. As regards the ancestral trees, for instance, they were a straggling line of willows, ornamented by the week's washing, which hung in the most startling curves thereon. Then there were other things which Fancy didn't put into her picture. She overlooked the red barn directly opposite the front door of the mansion, and the woodpile which reared its stately pyramid in the midst of the lovely old-fashioned flower garden, where the widow's tears drooped meekly at the feet of the brilliant tiger lilies, and the old maid's pinks, pathetic blossoms! were clasped close in the embrace of the ambitious chickweed.

The next day we went to see a cottage which, as the advertisement had it, was situated at the end of a rose-embowered lane, where the birds warbled all day amid the leafy branches. But the rose-embowered lane seemed to our less poetic imaginations like a cart-track across a marsh which was bordered now and then by a ragged line of alders, and cooled its sickly grasses very often in a muddy stream, which ran riot all over the rose-embowered neighborhood. As for the birds, the poetical writer of the advertisement must (as other ambitious but reckless poets do) have stimulated his intellectual and imaginative powers by the use of opium or absinthe until there was nothing left of him but imagination, and so

the lively tones of the bullfrogs, who were halting spring with a spirit which I never heard equalled, seemed to him like those of heavenly larks and tuneful thrushes. The cottage itself was of the style usually inhabited by festive foreigners, and we thought, on the whole, that we shouldn't care to purchase.

We suffered many disappointments of the same kind, but persevered, until at last we found a place which we thought might do. The house wasn't a cottage, but it was small, and rather picturesque in style. It wasn't as beautifully draped in old moss-covered branches as we desired, nor did it command such a paradisiacal view of rivers and hills, and meadows and distant spires, as the house of our earlier imagination had done, but we had grown less fastidious. Our enthusiasm over the dear delightful country was somewhat cooled. But there were trees there, and they waved beautifully in the sweet winds. There was always a pleasant sound of leaves, which is the dreamiest, most beautiful sound in the world; and the birds sang, too, from morning until night. Far away was a line of purple hills, and nearer was a pretty view of the clustering roofs and spires of the village. There was a bit of lawn in front of the house—so nice for croquet when one's gentleman friends came out from town!—a prettily planned flower garden on the south side; on the other side the richly cultivated lands of a farmer neighbor, and at the back a field. Is there anything so like heaven in this world as a field, with its peace, its fragrance, its breezes, its dew, and daisies, and buttercups, and birds'-nests, its cool grass, and gipsy brooks that sparkle and sing whether the skies frown or smile? Mamma and I were both in raptures over the field.

"Now, if we only had a cunning little Alderney cow, with a bell on her neck that would tinkle through the stillness, how romantic and lovely it would be!" said I, clasping my hands enthusiastically.

"Yes indeed," said mamma, "so it would. The place would look twice as picturesque with a cow standing meditatively in the deep grass. There are always cows in field pictures."

"'Taint me t'will be milkin' the balste," observed Mary Ann, our maid-of-all-work, pleasantly. She objected to the country, because "wun saw the face of a Christian

so sildom, and the bogs and fields were so screechin' lonesome."

"Of course not," said mamma, decidedly; "we must have a boy to take care of her. One can hardly do without a boy in the country. I am determined to have a vegetable garden, and we shall want him to take care of that, too."

Just at this point a cute-looking countryman came along, stopped still in front of our gate, and after regarding us thoughtfully for a few moments, remarked:

"You didn't want to buy a cow, I s'pose, did you, marm?"

Why he spoke in the past tense is a mystery.

"I think of purchasing a cow," said mamma, with dignity.

"Wall, then, I reckon I've got the very critter you want—a reg'lar fancy anermill, white as milk but for a few red spatters. She's an Alderney, and gives real yaller cream, besides bein' the pootliest, cleanest-shaped little cow you ever see. The fact is, she's too fancy for my farm, and I don't feel as if I could afford to keep such a valuable piece of stock long with my common breed. Her beauty aint nothin' to me, yer know, but would set off a 'stablishment like yours amazin'."

"Is she a real Alderney?" asked mamma, with interest.

"Wall, if you don't bleeve what I tell you about her, you jest step into my wagon, you and the young miss, and I'll take you over to my farm in no time, and you can see for yourself. The wagon aint a very fancy affair, but it's clean, and the best folks here rides in the same kind sometimes."

Mamma consented to go, and as for me, I could hardly wait to see the "pooty clean-shaped anermil."

We found her tied to a stake, and with rather a dejected expression of countenance; but she was a beauty.

"O mamma," said I, "she doesn't look like a real cow at all, but like one of Rosa Bonheur's beauties. What a lovely, slender aristocratic shape she has! what expressive eyes! what sensitive highbred nostrils! See how daintily she steps! and was there ever anything so pretty as her colors—cream-white, and that lovely dark red, like the red in a stained window, more than anything else? The expression of her face isn't so stupid and meek as that of most cows."

She did, indeed, look like a cow of spirit and fire, and mamma was as much in love with her as I was, though she very prudently withheld her admiration until after the bargain was made. The farmer asked an enormous price for her, and mamma thought she had better look about and see what she could get another Alderney for, before making any decision; but he assured her that there were several people talking about buying the cow, and unless she made haste she would be likely to lose her. "It wasn't 'coz he was anxious about sellin' of her, that he had spoken to her," he said, "but only 'coz some lady ought to have her; she was a real lady's anermil, that was a fact."

He came down a few dollars in his price, he was so sure that a lady ought to have her, and the bargain was made at once. The cow was driven home, and a sheepish-looking boy, who was recommended to us as "bein' real faithful, though he wasn't drivin'," was engaged that very day as cow compeller. O, how pretty this field looked with her in it, and how pretty she looked in the field! The tall daisies nodded against her sleek sides; the buttercups looked yellower as they nestled round her white feet; and as soon as she came, almost, she garlanded her horns beautifully by hooking them into a clematis vine which crept from tree to tree in a far corner of her domain. Surely there never was such a poetical cow.

The boy didn't promise to be so rare a treasure. He was a freckled-face urchin of fourteen or thereabouts. His cross eyes gave him a cute wide-awake expression which was contradicted by his listless manner and heavy gait. He was decidedly non-committal, and seemed to find the employment of punching frogs much more engaging than that of planting squashes and beans, though he professed to know a heap about "raisin' garden sarse." We and our belongings seemed to amuse him wonderfully, and when he first gazed upon our beautiful cow he indulged first in a low whistle, then in a prolonged fit of laughter.

"What is it, Erastus?" I questioned, gravely.

"Nothin', miss," he responded, with sudden solemnity; but I noticed afterwards that whenever his eyes rested on that cow they had a certain knowing twinkle in them which was very puzzling. "She'd orter have a bell onto her," he remarked, when I

produced the most musical bell that could be found anywhere in that region, and ordered it to be hung on Beauty's neck. We named her *Beauty* because we couldn't think of any other name that would suit her so well.

"Why?" I asked, for I was curious concerning the ideas of Erastus.

"So you can know where she is," he replied, grinning. "There's an old bach, Mr. Griswold, that owns that grain field, and he's dretful pertickler."

"What if he is 'dretful pertickler,' and what has Beauty's bell to do with his grain field, I should like to know?"

He grinned knowingly, but all the answer he gave was "coz." Afterwards I found out what he meant.

"Mamma," said I, "there's a horrid old bachelor living in that great ugly house next ours. I do hope that he wont call on us."

"Don't talk so, child; they say he's immensely rich," said she, reprovingly.

I laughed scornfully. "What if he is rich?—an old bachelor farmer, ignorant and rough, of course. I shouldn't fancy him at all for a papa-in-law."

Beauty's bell tinkled softly and sweetly through the field, and for a few bright days she seemed to take great delight in her new quarters; and it is small wonder that she did, for there never was a more perfect cow paradise. There were great fragrant patches of pink and white clover scattered all over it; a brook, bordered with sweet yellow cowslips, trailed its cool water through the grasses, and the elm trees drooped their branches very low, making a complete shelter from the noonday sun. But we were obliged to admire Beauty from a distance. She didn't take kindly to caresses at all, but shook her horns at you with the most charming playfulness if you attempted to approach her. She also objected strongly to being milked, and Erastus spent several hours every night and morning between her fastidious ladyship and the milkpail.

"I'm scared of her, that's a fact," he used to say when reproached for his slowness.

"And sure it's no wonder," Mary Ann would reply, sympathetically. "She's a wild-lookin' spalpeen. Me mother, God help her, was hooked wonce by one of them wild baistes in the ould counthry. She tossed her right plump onto a cabbage, and

she didn't get her mimmy for some time wid the jar. This Beauty'll be sarvin' some of yez the same way."

I was indignant. Beauty was very playful, to be sure, but there was no more wicked intent in her antics than in those of a kitten. Still, I preferred to have the wall between me and her, and enjoyed her picturesque loveliness more from the window than at a nearer view. She gave little milk, but it was rich and yellow like cream, as her former owner had assured us; and though I was somewhat disappointed that I could not make a pet of her, and string daisy chains about her neck, such as cows wear in lovely rural pictures, I was very proud of her, and so was mamma. All our city friends, who found it delightful to come out and see us, of course, went into raptures over her. Mr. Dreamer the poet was inspired to write some lovely verses by the slow soft tinkle of her bell in the dewy twilight air; and Mr. Palette the artist made a charming picture of her standing meditatively under the shadow of an elm. It was not long, however, before she wearied of the peaceful monotony of the field, and took a fancy to go a roving. The wall was strong, and not remarkably low, so though Beauty's bell was still for some time, and she was not to be seen from the house, we hadn't the slightest anxiety as to her whereabouts. She was probably chewing her cud in some cool shadow at the further end of the field. Erastus was in the garden hoeing peas, but before night he left his work and came slowly toward the door.

"Caouw's gone," said he, grinning provocingly.

"The cow's gone?" said mamma. "What do you mean?"

"She aint nowhere in the field, so I s'pose she's leapt over the fence and gone off."

"Why, she couldn't do that," said I. "She must be hidden in the tall grass, or under a tree."

"Shall I go after the caouw?" he asked, paying no heed to my remark.

"Certainly," said mamma; "go and find her. She must be somewhere in the field though."

He grinned again, and set off leisurely down the road, never even glancing towards the field. I went out on a tour of inspection, but she was nowhere to be seen. She must have "leapt the fence and gone off,"

sure enough, I thought. We waited anxiously for the return of Erastus, but he did not appear until after nine o'clock, and then he came without Beauty.

"Couldn't find her nowhere," he said; and he had walked as much as ten miles in search of her.

"Somebody has stolen her!" said I, wringing my hands.

"Lor, no," said Erastus, with one of his exasperating grins; "there aint nobody in these parts t'would steal a caouw. She's jest gone off, that's all."

He thought that was enough.

"He is such a slow stupid boy, one could not expect that he would find her. We will send a man on the search in the morning, if there is one to be found in the town," said mamma.

"Men is all hoein' and plantin'," observed Erastus, not at all moved by this low estimate of his powers.

But no man was needed, after all. Bright and early in the morning a circus troupe, with prancing horses and plumes, and red-coated riders, moving to a band of brassy music, came along the street, and, walking demurely beside the elephant, as if she had joined the company, was our lost Beauty. Erastus was sent in hot haste to let down the bars and drive the ambitious beast into her own quarters; but he was stoutly resisted by a crowd of officious spectators, who believed that she did indeed belong to the company, and that he was a thief. A lively scene ensued. Small boys, who saw tickets to the show as a reward for active service to the company, in their mind's eye, were especially valiant in the fight. There was a perfect din of shrieking and shouting, for Erastus, for once, was "drivin'." The stately procession fell woefully out of order. The leaders swore, the ponies pranced. Beauty ran first one way, then another, headed always by a pursuer or a defender, and once her horns came in violent contact with the sides of the elephant, who roared so in consequence that the people in the neighboring village thought there was an earthquake, and were half dead with fright. Mary Ann's Irish blood was up, and, in spite of all we could do, she had joined the affray, and was having a lively game of fisticuffs with one gallant youth of the village, while Erastus was rolling over and over on the ground, in active skirmish with another. A dreadful report was

spread abroad. Men armed with clubs came running from every direction; the women screamed, and still the elephant poured forth his melodious volume of noise, so no words of remonstrance could be heard. But at last, by the almost superhuman efforts of two wide-awake clowns, who descended from their seats of honor to the scene of action, and a gentlemanly-looking young man on horseback, who seemed to belong neither to the circus nor to the village, the disturbance was quelled. Beauty was penned behind the bars, and the procession moved on, though in less tranquil order. The vanquished youths dispersed with a very sheepish air, Erastus, with derisive fingers playing significantly on his bleeding nose, looking after them, and Mary Ann shaking her fists threateningly in their direction, the young man on horseback looking very much amused.

We sent immediately for workmen to add another rail to the fence, in order to make it too high for Beauty's gymnastic feats.

"It wont do no good," said Erastus, decidedly. "Mr. Griswold says how she ought to have a yoke onto her horns, she's such a dreadful breechy thing."

"What is a breechy thing?" we wondered; but we paid no heed to his remark.

"Mr. Griswold is that horrid old bachelor," said I. "I wish he would attend to his own affairs, and let me alone."

The next day the circus man gave us a call, demanding money for damages made on his elephant by some wild animal that we kept running about loose in the streets.

"Wild animal, indeed!" said mamma. "We keep nothing but a little Alderney cow, which you can see quietly feeding in her own enclosure, at the back of the house." And she refused to pay anything, of course.

"Whatever it is, marm, it has given my big elephant a severe wound in the side, and I am losing a great deal in consequence of his inability to perform," said he, persistently.

And rather than to have any trouble with him, mamma paid him half the sum he demanded, and he went his way.

The addition to the wall was speedily made, and after that, for a few days, we spent more quiet hours, and were beginning to hold Beauty in as high esteem as ever. She never even looked in the direction of the street, but fed quietly on the

clover, waded in the brook, or reposed dreamily under the trees. But one unhappy morning, when Erastus had gone strawberrying, and mamma had just taken the train for the city, missing the tinkle of her bell, and being unable to see her anywhere, I rushed for the field, and found that she had torn off the top rail of the fence with her horns, and was tramping Mr. Griswold's grain with high glee. It was a beautiful field of grain. Passers-by stopped to view it, it rustled so brightly in the sunshine; it was so rich and strong, and so early in the feather; and the wind singing songs in it under my window lulled me to sleep every night. Now, what a ruin was that portion which Beauty had trampled! I was in despair. What could I do? I was afraid to run after her myself, and there was no man in sight. Suddenly an angry voice called out from the top of the hill, and a stone, thrown violently at the cow, came very near hitting one of her sleek sides.

"It's that dreadful old bachelor!" came into my mind, as a man in a rustic straw hat appeared in view.

"How dare you throw stones at that cow?" I demanded, forgetting everything in my sudden anger.

But never heeding my furious speech, he threw another stone, which did hit her, though it was not large or sharp enough, I discovered afterwards, to inflict anything of a wound.

"Stop immediately!" I cried, threateningly, tapping the rail on which I was leaning with my parasol handle.

"If this beast isn't kept out of my grain, I wont answer for her life," came in good round tones from the distance.

"Don't you dare to touch her again!" I shouted, though it was quite needless to shout, as he was approaching very near me.

I recognized the gentlemanly-looking young man of the circus affair, and became somewhat confused.

"If she isn't—" he commenced, in an angry manner; then, having a full view of me for the first time, he stopped, with a look of dismay. "I beg your pardon. I thought it was the boy," he said, removing his hat politely.

I could hardly keep from laughing, though I was still angry, and anxious for Beauty's safety, after being struck by that ugly stone. He saw the laughter in my eyes I

suppose, for he looked relieved, and burst into a peal of laughter, himself. I regarded him with chilling dignity. Beauty was contentedly feeding on the grain.

"I should like very much to get my poor cow home if she isn't killed," I remarked, after a little silence. I wouldn't say that I was sorry for the destruction of his grain then.

A gleam of amusement lighted his face. "I don't think she is harmed in the least," he said coolly. "I should be very sorry if she were, but I am not sure that I shall not harm her, if I find her here again."

"So you remarked before," I said.

He smiled, but reddened furiously. I was considering how I should get Beauty home, but just then a dog came barking toward her, and she settled the matter herself, by jumping over the fence into her own abode. I made a hasty retreat, aware that he was following me with apologies of some kind, but I pretended that I didn't hear a word. I was afraid of the cow, for she was in a lively mood, and was shaking her horns very playfully. After that, we had her securely tied to a stake, and I must say I enjoyed my rambles in the field much better under these circumstances.

Mr. Griswold called at the house one evening, but I had a fearful headache and didn't go down to see him. Mamma scolded me well for it, afterwards.

"Why, he's a perfect gentleman," said she, "and is of the old aristocratic Griswold family at Charlesford. He has spent several years in Europe, and his manners are elegance itself. He admired your sketches very much, and do you know he is the very one that I saw standing under the maple tree the other evening, to listen to your singing. They call him an old bachelor, but he can't be thirty-five."

"I didn't find his manners so elegant," said I.

"And I am sure he didn't find *your* manners elegant. I am so distressed when I think of Beauty's raid on his grain field, and your encounter with him there. I ought to have apologized, but I hadn't the courage to do so."

The next day was Sunday. Mamma wasn't well, and I went to church alone. On my way home Mr. Griswold joined me, or at least, we found ourselves walking side by side, accidentally, and he accompanied me to our door. But we didn't get on very

well. I felt constrained and embarrassed I hardly knew why, then I thought of the stone he threw at Beauty, and his rude threat concerning that adored beast. He seemed rather embarrassed, too, switched the heads off the wayside daisies with his cane, and seemed to wish to say something which he could not put into speech. He was a handsome man, or rather a fine-looking one, with clearcut features a splendid head, and eyes that smiled pleasantly when they looked at you, whether his lips moved or no. I could not help liking him in spite of myself. He lingered a while at the gate, but I did not ask him to come in, and I laughed afterwards to think with how much more dignity and ceremony we parted than the occasion required. After that I met him occasionally in my walks, and sometimes we stopped to exchange a few words. We remarked what a charming day it was, how beautifully the corn was growing, how warm it had been yesterday, and made other conversation of like interest and profundity. Then a gleam of amusement would mingle with my embarrassment, and a deeper distress would show itself through his. Why we were so much embarrassed in each other's society I could not tell, I was by no means a timid, or bashful young woman, having seen a good deal of the world for one of my years, and I noticed that he was perfectly at his ease with other young ladies a thousand times grander than I. Several of the boarders at Green Springs came over to our church, people he had known in the city, and the feminine portion of the party always seemed very anxious to meet him after the service. He was almost awkward with me, but his manner with them was cool and elegant.

Beauty, tied to her stake, ate clover or dreamed her grave cow dreams in the shadow of leafy branches. Wild strawberries ripened in the field; wild roses opened their starry cups against the wall; the clematis vines that twined round the trees by the brook, were showered with great clusters of white blossoms. The midsummer wind sang softly in the grass, and drew the richest dreamiest music from Mr. Griswold's slowly gilding grain, just on the other side of the wall. I spent the greater part of my days there, dreaming or poring over a book under the great elm tree.

One morning I was seated there as usual, deep in one of Hawthorne's romances, when

suddenly a strange noise greeted my ears. I looked up and there was Beauty just in the act of jumping over the fence into that precious grain again. She had broken the cord which bound her to the stake, had lifted the top rail from the fence with her horns, and was taking a leisurely promenade through the splendid feathery forest.

I jumped up with a cry of dismay. Erastus was absent, of course, he always *was* absent when he was wanted, and the cow left to herself, would not be likely to leave a handful of the grain untrampled. O, if I could only drive her out myself, before she did any more harm, before she was discovered by Mr. Griswold. I never felt less amiably disposed toward the beast than I did at that moment. I could have seen a stone hit her with the utmost calm. I longed to be able to reach her with one from my own hand, and in my excited imagination I was rapidly sending her towards the butcher's shop. She was not to be tolerated any longer if she was pretty. In my calmer moment, I was afraid to approach her, she had such an ugly habit of shaking her horns at one, and Erastus reported that she had tossed him over a wall on them once. But I forgot my fears now, and arming myself with a long stick I climbed the fence and ran valiantly after her. She was absorbed in feeding, and did not heed my footsteps. I shouted at her, placing myself at her head in order to make her turn and go back in the same direction from which she came. If she had jumped over the fence she could jump back again. I waved my stick threateningly, but instead of turning, she ran furiously towards me. I felt a quick sharp pain in my side, was conscious of being hurled into the air, and knew no more until I opened my eyes and found myself in Mr. Griswold's arms with my head leaning quietly on his breast, but I was too dizzy, and weak, and stunned, to be startled at my position.

"Go for the doctor as fast as ever you can, John," I heard him say, but I attached no meaning to his words. I had no thought that the doctor was sent for on my account.

I glanced once into his face, then closed my eyes wearily again, content to remain where I was without asking any questions. I know that he was carrying me in those strong arms, but whither, I did not know or care. I don't think I could have spoken or moved.

With a kiss I came to life, however, like the enchanted maiden in the Sleeping Palace.

"If she should die," he murmured, anxiously, and bending over me his lips touched my forehead. I felt the warm blood surging into my face, and looked into his eyes with a sudden start.

He started, too, but as if with a joyful surprise.

"You are better," he said. "Thank God for that, you were only faint. Do you suffer, are you in pain?"

"No," I found voice to say, and I was so strangely, idiotically happy that I smiled.

He carried me into the house, his house, as that was the nearest, and the doctor came bustling and breathless. Then I remembered, but it seemed like a dream, long ago and dim, that Beauty had tossed me on her horns, and a suspicion that the doctor had come to see me, and that I might be seriously hurt, had such an effect on me that I went off into a dead faint again.

When I came to myself the second time, I found mamma bending over me, anxiously, and Mary Ann somewhere near, energetically denouncing that "haythen savage iv a cow." Mr. Griswold was there, too, and when I met his eyes my face grew crimson. I sat up and proposed to go home immediately.

"Not quite yet, dear," said mamma, "you are hardly able."

"No," said the doctor, "she isn't much hurt, but it will take her nerves a good while to recover from the shock. I should advise her to keep perfectly quiet for two or three hours at least."

I declared that I felt perfectly well, only for a little dizzy feeling in my head, and a little soreness in my side, but I remained on my sofa as I was bidden, and we grew very merry together. Mr. Griswold insisted on our taking dinner with him, and we accepted his invitation, as we could not well do otherwise under the circumstances, but I was very uncomfortable under his gaze, remembering my journey in his arms from the field to the house.

Mamma and Mrs. Grover the housekeeper, a ladylike elderly person, were soon on very good terms, and she was anxious for mamma to inspect her dairy. While they were gone on this errand Mr. Griswold and I were left alone.

I looked out of the window and saw Beauty standing innocently amid the buttercups under his favorite tree.

"O that dreadful cow," I said, "I never desire to see her again."

"I cannot feel like calling her that, since you are safe and your injuries were so slight."

I looked inquiringly into his face. I certainly had not expected him to be Beauty's champion.

"If it had not been for Beauty, I should never have known you," he continued. "If you had not followed her into my grain field, I should have started for Europe the next week. I staid because I hoped—" he paused as if in doubt what to say next.

Of course I tried to look surprised, and pretended that I hadn't the most distant idea what he meant, but it was all in vain. I could only drop my eyes and blush with the most provoking consciousness, and when mamma and Mrs. Grover returned, I had just promised to become Mrs. Griswold.

"I am going to send that dreadful cow to

the butcher to-morrow," said mamma, with decision that night when we were under our own roof once again.

"No, indeed, mamma," I exclaimed, "I feel greatly indebted to her. I am very, very happy, and it is all Beauty's doings. Mr. Griswold says that he has a back pasture two or three miles away, where she can roam at her own sweet will, and not harm any one. A tenant of his lives near, who can milk her, and you will not be likely to see her again, unless you wish to do so."

Afterwards, I explained, and she received my explanation very complacently. In the fall we were married, and in our beautiful grain field I have a cow just as picturesque and pretty as Beauty, and of a much more tranquil and amiable disposition. The only unpleasant news we hear from her is from small boys who go berrying expeditions and who have lively experience with her horns.